

ELA Glossary

A Toolkit, including curriculum guidance materials and resources applicable to use in grades prekindergarten to grade 12, is located on the Department's Web site. Please see:

ELA Toolkit: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/ela/elastandards/pubela.html>

Term	Definition
Analogies	A comparison between two dissimilar things to make a point or create an image.
Analyze	To examine something methodically.
Antonyms	A word having the opposite meaning to that of another word.
Appropriate group behaviors	<p>Conduct that includes the student displaying speaking and listening skills. (Speaking includes communicating through vocalization, signing, or using communication aids such as voice synthesizers.) This conduct would include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. speaking in turn b. looking at people when speaking and listening, if possible c. using an appropriate volume and rate d. answering or asking questions that relate to the topic being discussed e. thinking before speaking f. attending/listening to others and reacting appropriately to them g. sitting or standing still, as much as is possible h. gesturing appropriately i. being courteous in general
Argument in text	An attempt to try to convince someone that something is true and why.
Audience	The specified or clearly implied person(s) to whom the writer addresses his/her work or correspondence.
Author's message	The intent of the writer; what he/she is trying to say or what point the writer is trying to make; possibly related to the moral of the story, if it has one. The message is related to the author's purpose.
Author's purpose	Why the author wrote what he/she did; an author may have more than one purpose for writing a piece of literature, such as to entertain, instruct, persuade, or describe.
Author's style	The general characteristics of a work that distinguish it from another author's work; often includes the author's use of language and how the use of the language affects the author's intent.
Bias	An inclination of temperament or outlook; a personal and sometimes unreasoned judgment; prejudice—an instance of such prejudice; deviation of the expected value of a statistical estimate from the quantity it estimates; systematic error introduced into sampling or testing by selecting or encouraging one outcome or answer over others.
Capitalization	The use of capital letters in writing or printing.

Term	Definition
Central idea	The most important thoughts of a paragraph or larger section of the text. These ideas determine what the text is mostly about.
Character	A person portrayed in an artistic piece, such as a drama or novel.
Character motivation	This is what drives a character to think, behave, and interact with others. It is something that propels inside of a character.
Character thoughts	These are the inner ideas or consciousness of a character.
Character types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major or central characters are important to the development of the story. • Minor characters do not have a large role in the story but complement the major characters. • Dynamic characters change over time. • Static characters do not change over time. • Round characters are conflicted and are contradictory. • Flat characters have one type of characteristic and are the opposite of dynamic. • Stock characters are stereotypical or conventional characters. These characters are easily recognized by readers. • Protagonist characters are central in a story, and are often referred to as the story's main character. The protagonist may not always be admired by others in the story. • Antagonist characters represent the opposition against which the protagonist must face. • Anti-Hero is a major character, usually the protagonist, who is devoid of nobility, and who struggles for values that are not universally acceptable. • Foil is any character (an important supporting character) whose personal qualities contrast with another character (usually the protagonist).
Claims in text	Arguable statements found in a piece of writing.
Cogent information	Information that is pertinent, relevant, convincing or clear.
Collage	A grouping of words, pictures, symbols, etc., displayed without necessarily having a set pattern or organization.
Communicate	Convey knowledge of or information about something. Communication is an expression of information that can be conveyed via a variety of modes of communication. Examples: eye gaze, point, sign, verbalize
Compare	To point out similarities.

Term	Definition
Compose	All words that can refer to the act of writing and include the creation of original material, possibly by voice; by organizing or shaping information or ideas; and/or by using objects, visual language (selecting pictures, symbols, etc., to convey information), sign language (American Sign Language (ASL) or other gestural communication system), stamping, and any communication aids such as a voice synthesizer or speech-generating device that has audible speech output, from single switch through computer-based options, to communicate ideas, choices, or information.
Compound sentence	A compound sentence is composed of at least two independent clauses joined by a coordinator. The coordinators are as follows: <i>for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so</i> .
Connotative Meaning	Connotations suggest something beyond the basic meaning of the phrase in which they are used. It refers to the feel or overtone that a concept might have. For example, a possible connotation of home is a “place of warmth or affection.”
Context Clues	Information or details that surround a word or phrase and provide indirect or direct clues about its meaning.
Contrast	To indicate differences.
Conventions of Standard English	The English that with respect to punctuation, capitalization, usage, spelling, and sentence and paragraph structure not devoid of regional differences, that is well established by usage in the formal and informal speech and writing of the educated, and that is widely recognized as acceptable wherever English is spoken and understood.
Create	See <i>Compose</i> .
Data	Information that is often numeric and usually used for analysis.
Descriptive text	A text that lists the characteristics of something. The topic is usually about the attributes of a thing. Generally, third person pronoun forms are used, but if the text is a memoir or an autobiography, first person is used. Examples: requirements for employment, the appearance of a person, the details of a location
Dialect (standard vs. non-standard)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard dialect - a language variety used by a group of people in their speech, conversation or writing. • Non-Standard dialect - not conforming in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, etc., to the usage characteristic of and considered acceptable by most educated native speakers.
Drama	A prose or verse composition, especially one telling a serious story, that is intended for representation by actors impersonating the characters and performing the dialogue and action.
Event	Something that happens or an occurrence.
Explicit (Compare <i>Implicit</i>)	Fully and clearly expressed; leaving nothing implied; fully and clearly defined or formulated; readily observable. Text: Explicit text reveals the meaning by direct statements. For example, at the end of a fable, the moral is often stated.
Explicit Claim	An argument that is clearly developed or formulated.
Expository	A term for any form of writing that conveys information and explains ideas.

Term	Definition
Expository text	One of the classifications of discourse whose function is to inform, to instruct, or to present ideas and general truths objectively. Exposition presents information, provides explanations and definitions, and compares and contrasts.
Expressive Communication	The expression of meaningful verbal and/or nonverbal messages.
Facts	Information that can be verified as true.
Fallacies	Statements, arguments, or conclusions based on faulty reasoning.
Familiar text vs. unfamiliar text	Familiar text includes kinds of selections that are typical for the student and that he/she frequently reads or listens to; it is text that is commonly read or read aloud as part of the instructional program. Unfamiliar text includes kinds of text that the student would not be readily familiar with; it is text that would be new to a student when read or listened to.
Fiction	Texts that are not true stories but may have some basis in truth. Examples: historical fiction, a literary work whose content is produced by the imagination
Fictional Portrayal	A literary representation whose content is produced by the imagination and is not necessarily based on fact.
Figurative Language	The term "figurative language" is used to create a special effect or feeling. It is characterized by figures of speech—language that compares, exaggerates, or means something other than what it first appears to mean. It is a literary device used to create a special effect or feeling by making some type of interesting or creative comparison. The four most common are simile, metaphor, personification, and hyperbole.
Figures of Speech	A form of expression (as a simile or metaphor) used to convey meaning or heighten effect often by comparing or identifying one thing with another that has a meaning or connotation familiar to the reader or listener.
Fluency	The ability to read connected text with appropriate speed, accuracy and expression. "Appropriate" is individualized to the reader's needs. As a guide, the appropriate speed, accuracy, and expression allow a reader to gain meaning and build comprehension, understanding, and/or appreciation of text.
Formal	Tone of voice is more restrained and conventional than informal tones. For example, formal tones of voice tend to avoid contractions and slang. It also typically avoids first- and second-person "I" or "you" statements. Formal tone of voice should be used in academic documents, such as essays and exams, as well as professional documents.
Genre	A category used to classify literary works, usually by form, technique, or content. Examples: poetry, drama, fiction, nonfiction
Graphic Organizer	A visual representation of the material a student is learning. The organizer assists the student in brainstorming, showing the relationship of ideas and information, and/or organizing information to make it easier to understand how ideas connect. Examples: webs, maps, charts, Venn diagrams
Historical Account	Concerned with or treating of events of the past.

Term	Definition
Hyperlink	A word, phrase, picture, icon, etc., in a computer document on which a user may click to move to another part of the document or to another document.
Idioms	A speech form or an expression of a given language that is peculiar to it grammatically or cannot be understood from the individual meanings of its elements, as in <i>keep tabs on</i> .
Imperative	Of, relating to, or constituting the grammatical mood that expresses the will to influence the behavior of another. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “Eat your spinach!” is an <i>imperative</i> sentence. 2. “Help” in the sentence “Help me!” is an <i>imperative</i> verb.
Implicit (Compare <i>Explicit</i>)	Implied or understood, though not directly expressed. Text: Implicit text refers to text that must be interpreted; the meaning is “between the lines.”
Indicative	Noting or pertaining to the mood of the verb used for ordinary objective statements, questions, etc., as the verb <i>plays</i> in <i>John plays football</i> .
Infer, make an inference	A deduction or conclusion made from facts that are suggested or implied (implicit) rather than overtly stated (explicit).
Inferred Claim	An argument made from evidence or premises.
Inferred Meanings of Context	To derive by deduction or by induction; to conclude or surmise from facts or premises.
Informal	Denoting or characterized by idiom, vocabulary, etc., appropriate to everyday conversational language rather than to formal written language.
Informational text (Compare <i>Literary text</i>)	A text that is organized by topic and supporting details. Informational texts may have boldface headings, graphics, illustrations, and captions that signal importance in the text.
Informative	Something that gives information; instructive.
Interpret	To give or provide the meaning of; explain.
Justify	To show a good reason for a decision or conclusion by providing facts or data.
Literal questions	The answers are directly stated in the story and require no inference. The questions often address who, what, where, when, and why.
Literary devices	The techniques authors use to achieve a particular effect. Examples: symbolism, metaphor, simile, alliteration, personification, flashback, foreshadowing, exaggeration, analogy, irony.
Literary elements	Elements such as setting, plot, character, rhythm, rhyme, etc. For further information see <i>Story Elements</i> , <i>Rhythm</i> , and <i>Rhyme</i> .
Literary text (work) (Compare <i>Informational text</i>)	A text that tells a story to make a point, express a personal opinion, or provide an enjoyable experience. It includes a wide range of different texts. Literary text is organized by the structure of a story, poem, or drama.
Main Idea	The most important or central thought of a paragraph or larger section of text, which tells the reader what the text is about.
Main idea vs. theme/message	The phrase “main idea” is used with informational text; the term “theme” or “message” is used with literary text.

Term	Definition
Media	The means of communication, as radio and television, newspapers, and magazines that reach or influence people widely.
Metaphor	A <u>figure of speech</u> that does not use the word “like” or “as” in which an implied comparison is made between two essentially unlike things that actually have something in common. Example: “He is a lion in battle” or “Drowning in money”
Mood	A distinctive emotional quality or character; a prevailing emotional tone or general attitude.
Multimedia	Multimedia is media and content that uses a combination of different content forms. Multimedia includes a combination of text, audio, still images, animation, video or interactivity.
Multiple Meaning Word	Words that can have more than one use or definition, and the intended use must be conveyed by the <i>context</i> , the other words in the sentence or paragraph.
Narrative	Story or account of events, experiences, etc., whether true or fictitious; can be used to refer to a book or other form of literary work containing such a story. See <i>Story</i> .
Nonfiction	Texts that are based on fact; literary works that are not fiction. Examples: informational text, content area text, practical “how-to” text, biography, autobiography
Note taking	The act of composing text that is a condensed or informal record, or a brief comment or explanation based on read or listened-to information.
Noun	The part of speech that is used to name a person, place, thing, quality, or action and can function as the subject or object of a verb; the object of a preposition.
Objective Summary	A comprehensive and usually brief abstract devoid of emotion and feeling. It is used to determine and analyze facts.
Opinion	Judgment or belief not founded on certainty or proof; the prevailing or popular feeling or view (public opinion); an evaluation, impression, or estimation of the value or worth of a person or thing.
Outline	<p>A type of graphic scheme of the organization of a paper or a hierarchical way to display related items of text to graphically depict their relationships. It indicates the main arguments for the thesis as well as the subtopics under each main point. Outlines range from an informal use of indenting and graphics (such as —, *, +) to a formal use of Roman numerals and letters. Regardless of the degree of formality, the function of an outline is to help the writer consider the most effective way to say what the writer wants to say. Many writers use outlines to help them think through the various stages of the writing process. Outlines are often used by students for research papers. Outlines provide a summary showing the logical flow of a paper. They are useful because they help the writer:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. organize his/her thoughts before getting bogged down in word choice and sentence structure; 2. show which ideas need illustration or elaboration; and 3. choose an organizational technique for the writing, whether it be logical, chronological, or categorical in nature.

Term	Definition
Paragraph	One or more sentences that develop a complete thought. A caption can be considered a paragraph.
Pattern of Events	A series of actions that together show how things normally happen or are done.
Personification	A figure of speech in which inanimate objects or abstractions are endowed with human qualities or are represented as possessing human form.
Perspective: literary, political, personal, and evaluative criteria	A point of view or way of judging a piece of literature; a literary perspective might analyze a piece of literature based on its literary merits; a political perspective might analyze the same piece of literature based on the political climate in which it was written or the political standpoint of the author; a personal perspective would present a reader’s view based on personal criteria. Personal criteria are the basis for an evaluation.
Persuasion	A communicative purpose in which a writer attempts to convince an audience of one’s point of view or to move the audience to action.
Physical Characteristics	Features of a substance that are primarily sensory (physical) and generally measurable, such as area, hardness, smoothness, shape, color, weight, volume, etc.
Poetry	Writing designed to convey a vivid and imaginative sense of experience, especially by the use of condensed language chosen for its sound and suggestive power as well as for its meaning. Language choices may also be made to achieve meter, rhyme, natural cadences, and metaphors.
Point of view vs. Purpose	Point of view determines who is telling the story—the perspective, or vantage point from which an author presents a story or text. Purpose determines why an author writes a story or text.
Points of View	<p>The position of the narrator in relation to the story, as indicated by the narrator’s outlook from which the events are depicted and by the attitude toward the characters.</p> <p>Depending on the topic, purpose, and audience, writers of nonfiction may rely on the first-person point of view (<i>I, we</i>), the second-person (<i>you, your</i>), or the third-person (<i>he, she, it, they</i>).</p>
Predict (make a prediction)	A declaration or indication in advance of an occurrence, especially to foretell on the basis of observation, details from a story, personal experience, or scientific reason.
Pronoun	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal pronouns denote an entity of a specific grammatical person: first person (as in the case of <i>I, me, we</i>, etc.), second person (as in the case of <i>you</i>), or third person (<i>he, she, they</i>, etc.) • Subject pronouns are used when the person or thing is the subject of the sentence or clause. English example: <i>I like to eat chips, but she does not.</i> • Object pronouns are used when the person or thing is the object of the sentence or clause. English example: <i>John likes me but not her.</i> • Direct and indirect object pronouns. English uses the same oblique form for both; for example: <i>Mary loves him</i> (direct object); <i>Mary sent him a letter</i> (indirect object).
Prose	A literary medium distinguished from poetry, especially by its greater irregularity, variety of rhythm, and lack of metrical structure, and its closer correspondence to the patterns of everyday spoken or written language.

Term	Definition
Punctuation	The practice or system of using certain conventional marks or characters in writing or printing in order to separate elements and make the meaning clear, as in ending a sentence or separating clauses.
Purpose	The reason for which something exists or is done, made, used, etc.
Reflect	To express carefully considered thoughts.
Relevant Source	Any source that is reliable, credible, and one that helps to prove or illustrate a central point.
Relevant vs. irrelevant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant: related to a topic in some way that makes a difference to the purpose that is being presented. • Irrelevant: not related to a topic in some way that makes a difference to the purpose that is being presented.
Research	Studious inquiry or examination.
Rhyme	<p>The repetition of sounds in two or more words or phrases that appear close to each other in a poem.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>End rhyme</i> occurs at the end of lines. • A <i>rhyme scheme</i> is the pattern of end rhymes. • An <i>internal rhyme</i> occurs within a line. • <i>Slant rhyme</i> is an approximate rhyme.
Rhythm	The regular recurrence and speed of sound and stresses in a poem or work of prose.
Salutation	Word or phrase of greeting that typically occurs at the beginning of text (e.g., a letter or card) or personal interaction (e.g., conversation)
Search tool	An internet tool assists in finding information quickly and without wading through hundreds of irrelevant results generally isolates results based on specified search parameter(s).
Setting	The locale or period in which the action of a novel, play, film, etc., takes place.
Sidebar	A short news feature alongside and highlighting a longer story; a typographically distinct section of a page, as in a book or magazine, that amplifies or highlights the main text.
Simile	A figure of speech in which two essentially unlike things are compared, often in a phrase introduced by the word “like” or “as.”
Simple Sentence	A sentence having only one clause, as <i>I saw her the day before yesterday.</i>
Social Context	The psychological position that people react to things differently depending on their immediate environment.
Spelling	The manner in which words are spelled; orthography; a group of letters representing a word.
Story	An account of incidents or events; a narrative, either true or fictitious, that can be in prose or verse and is designed to interest, amuse, or instruct the listener or reader; a tale. A story can be a variety of lengths depending on the instructional needs of the student. It can be told through writing, pictures, symbols, etc., or through a combination of forms.

Term	Definition
Story elements	<p>Basic story elements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. plot – the sequence of events or actions in a novel, play, short story, or narrative poem b. character – a person or sometimes an animal that takes part in the plot c. setting – time and place in which a short story, novel, or narrative poem take place d. theme – the central meaning of a literary work e. point of view – the perspective or vantage point from which a literary work is told, or the way in which an author reveals characters, actions, and ideas
Subjunctive	<p>In some languages, a verb form that refers to actions that are possibilities rather than facts: In the sentence 'I wish I were rich', the verb 'were' is in the subjunctive.</p>
Summarize	<p>An approach to thinking and writing that expresses the main points of one or several resources, including readings, research findings, events, the writer’s own ideas, etc.</p>
Supporting details	<p>Supporting details are statements which support a topic or theme.</p>
Synonyms	<p>A word having the same or nearly the same meaning as another in the language, as <i>happy, joyful, elated</i>.</p>
Task	<p>A usually assigned piece of work often to be finished within a certain time.</p>
Text feature	<p>Detail that the author wants to get to the reader. A few examples of text features consist of the following: white space, underline, italics, boldface, boxes, size, capitalization, title, font type and size, underscoring, layout, color, illustrations, graphs, charts or headings.</p>
Text-to-self	<p>To relate to something in text that has happen to you; connecting ideas within a text to our beliefs or experiences.</p>
Text-to-text	<p>To relate something in text to another text.</p>
Text-to-world	<p>To relate something in text to things that happen in the community, environment, world or history.</p>
Texts (written phrases, sentences, paragraphs, pictures, symbols, illustrations; can be digitally available)	<p>Generally, the words of something that are written or printed; here words can be conveyed through pictures, symbols, signing, etc., or through a combination of forms.</p> <p>The definition of texts from the National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE) publication is “printed communication in their varied forms; oral communications, including conversations, speeches, etc., and visual communications such as film, video, and computer displays.”</p>
Textual evidence	<p>Evidence from one or more texts used to support an argument or position, and is derived from reading and drawing information from other text.</p>
Tone	<p>The writer’s or speaker’s attitude toward a subject, character, or audience conveyed through the author’s choice of words and detail.</p> <p>Examples: serious, humorous, sarcastic, objective</p>

Term	Definition
Types of reading (e.g., choral, popcorn, round-robin, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choral reading: people reading in unison. • Popcorn reading or round-robin reading: people taking turns reading by a random selection (for example, tossing a soft object to the person to designate the next reader).
Validity	An argument with a basis that can be supported by reason.
Verb	The part of speech that expresses existence, action, or occurrence.
Verse	A writing/composition (written, printed, or orally composed) arranged with a metrical pattern (measured, cadence, etc.) or pattern of rhythm, typically having a rhyme; a group of lines that form a unit in a poem or song; a stanza.
Visual cue	A signal that prompts someone to take action; features that can aid a user in performing a task.
Visual imagery	An image an author creates through figures of speech (e.g., metaphor, hyperbole) to help a reader understand an abstract idea (e.g., beauty)
Visual language	Elements including print, symbols (for example, PEC or Boardmaker symbols), photos, pictures, objects, etc., that communicate or represent information. Additional examples of visual language include maps, diagrams, models, and graphs Visual language may be used singularly (such as only symbols) or in combination (such as objects and print).
Voice	Written or spoken expression, as of feeling, opinion, etc.; in rhetoric and literary studies, the distinctive style or manner of expression of an author or narrator
Write	See <i>Compose</i> .
Writing process	<p>A series of overlapping and recursive processes (e.g., prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing) a writer often moves among when developing a piece of writing:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. prewriting – to formulate and organize ideas in preparation for writing b. drafting – to draw the preliminary sketch, version, plan, or initial composition of the final product c. revising – to review in order to correct or improve d. editing – to make revisions to the draft version of the final product

Resources:

- NAEP Reading for 2009 and Writing for 2011 Framework (prepublication editions, 2007) available at <http://www.nagb.org/publications/frameworks.htm>
- *Standards for the English Language Arts Book*, created by NCTE and IRA, published by NCTE
- *Webster's II New Collegiate Dictionary* (Houghton Mifflin Co., 2001)
- <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/>:
 - The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition copyright ©2000 by Houghton Mifflin Company
 - *Collins English Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged* © HarperCollins Publishers 1991, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2003
- <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/>
- <http://dictionary.reference.com/>
 - Random House Dictionary, © Random House, Inc. 2011.
- <http://www.maine.gov/education/lres/pei/glossary032008.pdf>
- School Improvement Maryland available at <http://mdk12.org/instruction/curriculum/reading/glossary.shtml>
- <http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/outlines.shtml> Disclaimer: The New York State Education Department does not recommend specific texts or publishers. Other resources may be visited for definitions.