



CRACK THE CODE:
Understanding & Responding to STAAR ECR Prompts

BY KRISTINA SMEKENS

EMAIL kristina@smekenseducation.com | WEBSITE www.SmekensEducation.com | Social media @SmekensEd

Understand the expectations of the ECR.

- Explain that a longer prompt requires a longer response.
- Identify the potential genres— informative versus argumentative.
- Identify the potential formats— essay versus letter.

| | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| TEKS RLA Strand 6 Composition: Genres | (A) Compose personal narratives, fiction, and poetry... | (B) Compose informational texts, including multi-paragraph essays... | (C) Compose multi-paragraph argumentative texts... | (D) Compose correspondence that reflects an opinion, registers a complaint, or provides information in a professional or friendly structure... |
|--|---|--|--|--|



Identify the 3 parts of a typical prompt.



- 1

BACKGROUND | The first sentences review the broad subject and/or the text(s) read.
- 2

TASK | The middle sentences outline the specific writing task.
- 3

EVIDENCE | The final sentences remind the reader to include textual evidence from the provided sources.

Flavored milk is popular with many students, but some people believe that flavored milk should not be served in school cafeterias. After reading “Milk Nutrition” by the Midwest Dairy Association and Jamie Oliver’s video on “Sugar Overload,” write an essay in which you take a position: do you agree or disagree with serving flavored milk in school cafeterias?

Be certain to use information found in the article and video to support your point of view. Use facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, and examples from the article and video to write about the subject knowledgeably. Also, remember to use correct grammar, usage, capitalization, and spelling when writing your essay.

Read the article “Are People Ready for Robots?” Based on the information in the article, write a response to the following: Explain some ways humans benefit from allowing robots to complete simple tasks at home and in the workplace.

Write a well-organized informational composition that uses specific evidence from the article to support your answer.

Decode the prompt to accurately identify the complex task.

| | Circle the purpose or genre you would write. | Circle the format you would use. | Describe the organization you would follow. |
|--|--|---|---|
| Your class has researched about different careers. Now correspond with your peers informing them on how to become an astronaut. Your letter will be read by other students. | Narrative Informative Argumentative | Essay Friendly letter Business letter | |
| After reading how some cities entice citizens to recycle, explain your opinion about why people should or should not be rewarded for recycling. | Narrative Informative Argumentative | Essay Friendly letter Business letter | |
| You've read about different types of service animals and the new rule that allows only dogs and miniature horses to be service animals in public places. Argue whether this rule is fair or not. | Narrative Informative Argumentative | Essay Friendly letter Business letter | |
| Based on the story, compare the personality traits of the two main characters. Explain ways that they are similar and different. | Narrative Informative Argumentative | Essay Friendly letter Business letter | |
| Can the brain become smarter or is intelligence fixed? After reading articles on learning and the brain, correspond with parents explaining the brain-development process from that occurs from birth to twenty-five years of age. | Narrative Informative Argumentative | Essay Friendly letter Business letter | |
| Each author uses different evidence to support his or her stance on school start times. Write an essay that compares each author's overall claim about school start times and how he or she advances his or her unique perspective. | Narrative Informative Argumentative | Essay Friendly letter Business letter | |
| The story "Departure" describes a character leaving home, and the passage from "Up the Coolly" describes a character returning home. Write an essay that analyzes how the narrators relate the events about the journeys in a manner that builds mystery and/or tension. | Narrative Informative Argumentative | Essay Friendly letter Business letter | |

Recognize the prompt-to-response relationship.

Read the ECR prompt.

Decode the academic vocabulary.

Determine the genre & organization.

| THE PROMPT | KEY WORDS WITHIN THE TASK | | GENRE | TEXT STRUCTURE | |
|--|--|---|--|--|--|
| Detail how racism evolved from the beginning to the end of Jackie Robinson's baseball career. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> explain the process sequence the events order the events describe the steps over time | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> evolution/evolve show the time line from beginning to end initial to now conception to current | Informative How-to response | Step 1, First Step 2, Second Step 3, Third Step 4, Fourth | Introduction <i>The first step...</i> <i>Next...</i> <i>Then...</i> <i>Finally...</i> Conclusion |
| Detail how Gaylord Nelson inspired, informed, and initiated Earth Day from its conception to its current state. | | | | | |
| Explain the different kinds of success Jackie Robinson achieved in his lifetime. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify the main points explain the main ideas provide multiple reasons describe the topic identify the types | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> explain different kinds explain different aspects explain the parts describe different components name different facets | Informative Explanatory response | Main Idea 1 Main Idea 2 Main Idea 3 | Introduction <i>One way...</i> <i>Another facet...</i> <i>A third big part...</i> Conclusion |
| Explain the different aspects of Earth Day as it's celebrated annually around the world. | | | | | |
| Compare Jackie Robinson's baseball career to that of Babe Ruth. Explain their similarities and differences. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> write a comparison compare ___ to ___ identify similarities main differences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> details presented about both evaluate the main differences show how alike and different explain similarities and differences | Informative Compare-Contrast response | Category 1 Category 2 Category 3 | Introduction <i>Both address...</i> <i>A second category...</i> <i>They also include...</i> Conclusion |
| Compare today's Earth Day celebrations to the first one led by Gaylord Nelson. | | | | | |
| Write an opinion essay identifying the reason(s) Jackie Robinson experienced success. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> determine a position write an opinion make a claim | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> draw conclusions convince the audience write a persuasive provide multiple reasons support reasons with evidence | Persuasive response | Reason 1 Reason 2 Reason 3 | Introduction <i>One reason...</i> <i>A second reason...</i> <i>A third reason...</i> Conclusion |
| Convince the audience that Gaylord Nelson's concerns about the Earth are/are not being addressed. | | | | | |
| Argue if Jackie Robinson's baseball success was/was not greater than that of Babe Ruth's. Be sure to acknowledge opposing viewpoints within your essay. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> argue if ___ or ___ provide multiple reasons support reasons with evidence include opposition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide counterclaims consider multiple perspectives address both viewpoints determine strengths and weaknesses | Argumentative response | Reason 1 Reason 2 Counterclaim Reason 3 | Introduction <i>One reason...</i> <i>A second reason...</i> <i>Despite...</i> <i>A third reason...</i> Conclusion |
| Convince the audience that Gaylord Nelson's concerns about the Earth are/are not being addressed. Address both viewpoints. | | | | | |