

# Off to the RACES for a Winning Written Response



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|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>R</b> <b>RESTATE THE QUESTION</b></p> <p>This refers to restating or rephrasing the question or prompt in your own words to ensure that you understand it correctly.</p>                                                                                                                                              | <p><b>SAMPLE SENTENCE STARTERS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– In [title], the author examines the idea that</li> <li>– In [title], the text highlights</li> <li>– The story, [title], explores</li> </ul>                                   |
| <p><b>A</b> <b>ANSWER THE QUESTION</b></p> <p>Provide a clear and concise answer to the question or prompt. This is the main part of your response and should directly address what is being asked.</p>                                                                                                                     | <p><b>SAMPLE SENTENCE STARTERS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– [Author] emphasizes that</li> <li>– The text highlights how</li> <li>– The narrative shows that</li> </ul>                                                                    |
| <p><b>C</b> <b>CITE YOUR EVIDENCE</b></p> <p>Support your answer with evidence or examples. This could involve referencing specific facts, data, quotations, or other sources of information that support your response. Citing your sources helps to strengthen your argument and provide credibility to your writing.</p> | <p><b>SAMPLE SENTENCE STARTERS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– For example, when...</li> <li>– The author shows this when</li> <li>– This can be seen when</li> <li>– According to the narrator</li> <li>– The line “_____” shows</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>E</b> <b>EXPLAIN YOUR RESPONSE</b></p> <p>Elaborate on your answer and provide further clarification or reasoning. Explain how your evidence or examples support your answer and demonstrate your understanding of the topic.</p>                                                                                     | <p><b>SAMPLE SENTENCE STARTERS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– This reinforces the idea that</li> <li>– This connects to</li> <li>– This emphasizes the idea</li> <li>– This reveals that</li> </ul>                                         |
| <p><b>S</b> <b>SUMMARIZE/SYNTHESIZE</b></p> <p>Summarize your response by restating your main points and bringing your writing to a conclusion. This helps to reinforce your main argument and leave a lasting impression on the reader.</p>                                                                                | <p><b>SAMPLE SENTENCE STARTERS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Ultimately, the text suggests</li> <li>– This encourages readers to consider</li> <li>– Overall, the story shows...</li> </ul>                                                |

## EXAMPLE

Here is a Proficient response to the prompt “Why is it important to always carry a towel?”:

According to *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, a towel is one of the most useful items a traveler can carry because it has many practical and social benefits. A towel can keep you warm like a blanket, dry you off, serve as something to lie on, help clean up messes, or even be used to signal for help. More importantly, while hitchhiking across the galaxy, a towel can be wrapped around your head to avoid noxious smells or to avoid being seen by the Ravenous Bugblatter Beast of Traal. The *Guide* also notes that if someone always knows where their towel is, others will see them as prepared and responsible, and will be more willing to lend them things. In this way, the towel represents both usefulness and preparedness, showing that a simple item can make a big difference when facing the unexpected.

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### EXAMPLE

Here is a Proficient response to the prompt “Why is annotating a good learning strategy?”:

Annotating a text is a powerful learning strategy that helps students engage more deeply and meaningfully with what they read. It improves comprehension because it forces readers to interact actively with the material instead of passively skimming it. For example, when students underline key ideas, circle unfamiliar vocabulary, and write questions in the margins, they slow down and think about what the text is actually saying. In addition, summarizing paragraphs in their own words or marking patterns and repeated ideas helps them identify main arguments and important details. Students who annotate often perform better in discussions and writing tasks because they already have organized notes and evidence prepared. These examples show that annotation strengthens understanding by turning reading into an active process rather than a passive one. Overall, annotating a text is an effective strategy because it helps students retain information, think critically, and build stronger responses to what they read.

### EXAMPLE

Here is a Proficient response to the prompt “Explain a significant symbol in the novel *Lost in the Barrens* by Farley Mowat”:

In *Lost in the Barrens* by Farley Mowat, one significant symbol is the fire that Awasin and Jamie build to survive in the wilderness. The fire represents both physical safety and the growing friendship between the two boys as they learn to depend on one another. For example, when they first manage to start a fire after days of cold and hunger, Mowat writes that “the small flame danced like life itself, and for the first time they felt truly warm.” This moment transforms the fire from a source of heat into a symbol of hope and connection. The fire’s warmth not only keeps them alive, it mirrors the trust and cooperation that begin to form between them. Each time they build or protect the fire, it reflects their determination to survive together. Mowat uses this symbol to show that survival in the wilderness depends as much on human connection and resilience as it does on physical strength.