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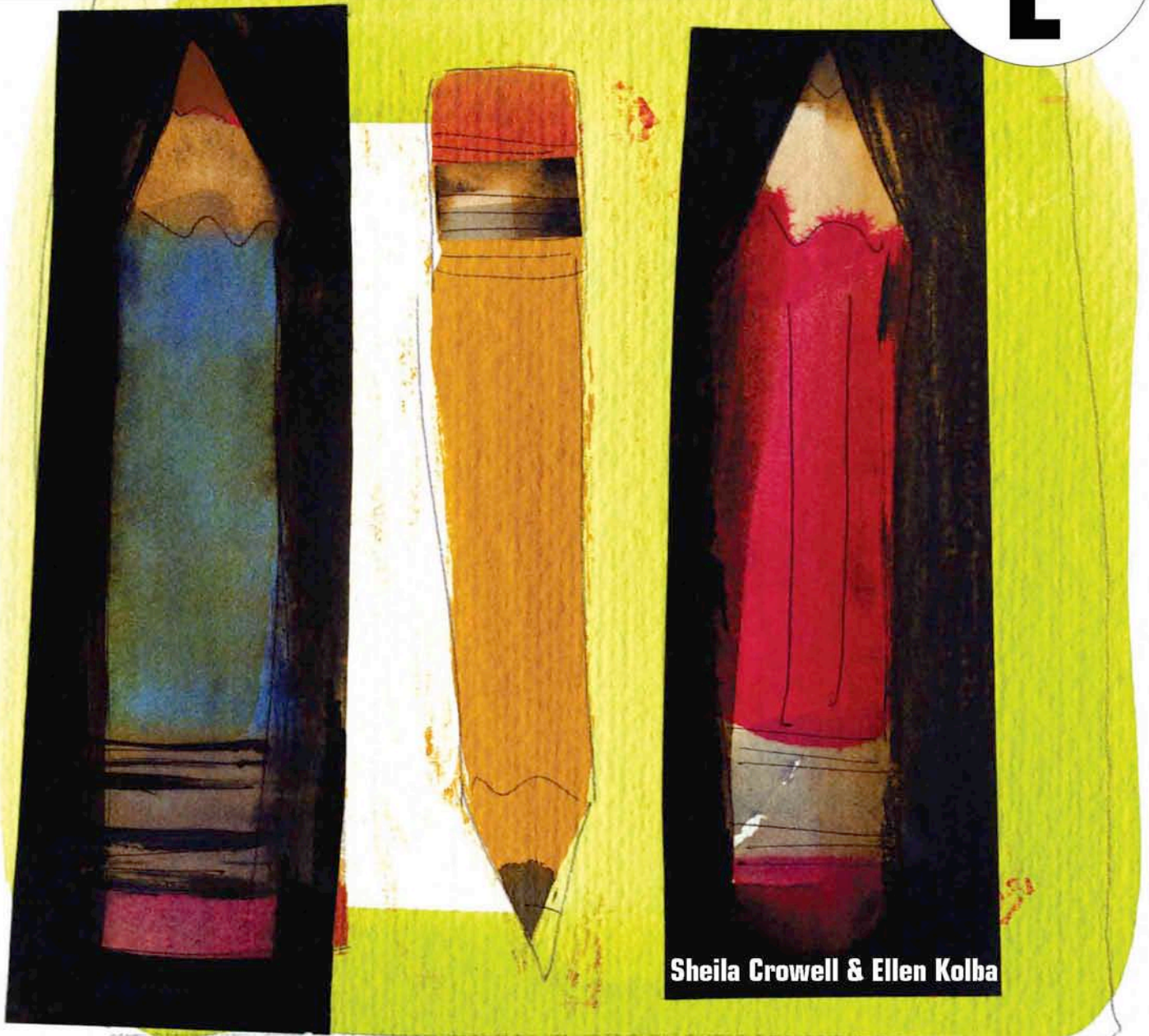


Write It Out

*Mastering Short and Extended Responses
to Open-Ended Questions*

LEVEL

E



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Lesson 1

What Makes a Good Answer?

Read this informational passage. The question on the next page asks you to identify the main idea and the supporting details.

Pictures in the Sky

The next time you go out at night in the fall, look toward the north. There, hanging low in the sky, sparkles a group of stars that look like the picture on this page. You can easily see them if the skies are clear and the street lights aren't too bright.

Throughout history, people have always "connected the dots" to make pictures out of groups of stars. Around the world, people have given these groupings different names. For example, to people who live in the United States, one star grouping looks like a long-handled dipper that people once used to scoop drinking water out of a well. About two hundred years ago they started calling it the Big Dipper. We still call it that today, even though we don't use dippers much anymore.

However, not everyone around the world identified this star grouping as a "big dipper." People who live in the south of France think these stars look like a saucepan, which is not very different from a dipper. People in Britain look at these stars and see an old-fashioned plow or a wagon. The four stars in front, which are the bowl of the Big Dipper, make up the wagon's body. The rest of the stars, which are the handle of the Big Dipper, create the pole to which horses or oxen are hitched to the wagon.

The ancient Egyptians looked at these stars and saw the leg of a bull. The ancient Greeks looked at the stars and saw a giant bear with a long tail. Some Native Americans of the Plains saw a skunk, while the Maya Native Americans of Mexico saw a long-tailed parrot.

What picture do you see in these stars? What picture do you imagine as you connect the dots?



The main idea is expressed in this paragraph.

These paragraphs are loaded with supporting details.

What is the main idea of the passage? Support your answer with details from the passage.

Melissa's Answer:

One way to learn how to write a good answer is to analyze a good answer that someone has written. Melissa wrote a good answer to this question. Read what she wrote.

The main idea of this passage is that different people who look at the stars in the Big Dipper see different things. For example, Americans see a dipper. However, the British see a wagon. The ancient Greeks saw a bear, and different Native American people saw a skunk or a parrot.

What Makes Melissa's Answer Work?

Melissa does what the test scorers look for:

- ✓ She summarizes the main idea.
- ✓ She mentions a few details that support the main idea.
- ✓ She writes clear, complete sentences and arranges them in an order that makes sense.
- ✓ She demonstrates that she has read both the question and the reading selection very carefully.
- ✓ She remembers the SLAMS rules!

HINT!

The people who score the test look for the following things:

- * A clear and complete sentence that tells the main idea.
- * Details from the selection that support your first sentence.
- * Complete, correct, and interesting sentences.

Now let's take a closer look at Melissa's answer to see why it is successful.

1. Melissa states the main idea of the passage.

What is Melissa's main idea? Write her main-idea sentence here.

2. In her answer, Melissa includes details from the passage that support the main idea. One detail tells what Americans see in these stars.

a. **In which sentence does Melissa include this detail? Write Melissa's sentence here.**

b. **Find another supporting detail that Melissa includes in her answer. Write the sentence in which Melissa gives that detail here.**

3. One reason that Melissa's answer is so clear and easy to understand is that she uses words like *for example* to connect ideas.

Find another connecting word that Melissa uses. Write the sentence with that word here.

Tools & Tips

You explored several reasons why Melissa’s answer worked. One reason was that she used words like **for example** to connect her ideas. Another reason is that she connected ideas by combining sentences. Here is an example from her answer:

The ancient Greeks saw a bear, and different Native American people saw a skunk or a parrot.

How many ideas have been combined in this sentence? Two ideas have been listed below. Finish the list.

- The ancient Greeks saw a bear.
- Some Native American people saw a skunk.

Try it. Combine the ideas below into one sentence. Notice that you can combine the ideas in more ways than one.

This group of stars looked like a dipper. They looked like a dipper with a long handle. People used these dippers to scoop water out of a well.

Write your combined sentence here.
