

TOEFL iBT Test 4

WRITING

This section measures your ability to write in English to communicate in an academic environment.

There are two writing questions in this section.

For question 1, you will read a passage and listen to a lecture about the same topic. You may take notes while you read and listen. Then you will write a response to a question based on what you have read and heard. You may look back at the passage when answering the question. You may use your notes to help you answer the question. You have 20 minutes to plan and write your response.

For question 2, you will write an essay based on your own knowledge and experience. You have 30 minutes to plan and complete your essay.

Directions: Give yourself 3 minutes to read the passage.


Reading Time: 3 minutes

Jane Austen (1775–1817) is one of the most famous of all English novelists, and today her novels are more popular than ever, with several recently adapted as Hollywood movies. But we do not have many records of what she looked like. For a long time, the only accepted image of Austen was an amateur sketch of an adult Austen made by her sister Cassandra. However, recently a professionally painted, full-length portrait of a teenage girl owned by a member of the Austen family has come up for sale. Although the professional painting is not titled *Jane Austen*, there are good reasons to believe she is the subject.

First, in 1882, several decades after Austen’s death, Austen’s family gave permission to use the portrait as an illustration in an edition of her letters. Austen’s family clearly recognized it as a portrait of the author. So, for over a century now, the Austen family itself has endorsed the claim that the girl in the portrait is Jane Austen.


Second, the face in the portrait clearly resembles the one in Cassandra’s sketch, which we know depicts Austen. Though somewhat amateurish, the sketch communicates definite details about Austen’s face. Even though the Cassandra sketch is of an adult Jane Austen, the features are still similar to those of the teenage girl in the painting. The eyebrows, nose, mouth, and overall shape of the face are very much like those in the full-length portrait.

Third, although the painting is unsigned and undated, there is evidence that it was painted when Austen was a teenager. The style links it to Ozias Humphrey, a society portrait painter who was the kind of professional the wealthy Austen family would hire. Humphrey was active in the late 1780s and early 1790s, exactly the period when Jane Austen was the age of the girl in the painting.

Listen to Track 120. 



Directions: You have 20 minutes to plan and write your response. Your response will be judged on the basis of the quality of your writing and on how well your response presents the points in the lecture and their relationship to the reading passage. Typically, an effective response will be 150 to 225 words.

Listen to Track 121. 

Response Time: 20 minutes

1. Summarize the points made in the lecture, being sure to explain how they respond to the specific arguments made in the reading passage.

Directions: Read the question below. You have 30 minutes to plan, write, and revise your essay. Typically, an effective response will contain a minimum of 300 words.

Response Time: 30 minutes

2. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

It is better to have broad knowledge of many academic subjects than to specialize in one specific subject.

Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

ANSWERS

Writing Section

Prompts, Topic Notes, and Sample Responses with Rater Comments

Use the sample Integrated and Independent Writing Rubrics in Appendix A to see how responses are scored.

This section includes topic notes that are guides to the kind of information raters expect to read in a high-level response.

This section also refers to sample responses, which can be found on the accompanying DVD.

These responses were scored at the highest level. The responses are followed by comments from certified ETS raters.

Question 1

Prompt

Summarize the points made in the lecture, being sure to explain how they respond to the specific arguments made in the reading passage.

Topic Notes

The reading discusses a painting has been identified as depicting a teenaged Jane Austen, but the lecturer presents three reasons that cast doubt on the reading's support of this:

resemblance between the Austen family members; specifically he names Mary, one of Jane's distant cousins.

Third, according to the passage the portrait was attributed to Humphrey. However, the lecture presents other evidence relating

Point made in the reading	Corresponding point from the lecture
Jane Austen's family members authorized the portrait for use in the 1882 edition of her letters.	Although Jane Austen's relatives did authorize the portrait in question for use with an edition of her letters, so much time had passed since Jane died that none of them would have actually seen the teenaged Jane.
There is a strong resemblance between Cassandra's sketch of Jane and the portrait.	The portrait could actually be of one of the many female relatives (for example, Mary Ann Campion) who may have resembled Jane, and who were teenagers at the time the portrait was painted.
Although we don't know who painted the portrait, its style is like that of a painter who was active at the same time the Austen family might have hired him to paint a teenaged Jane.	A date stamped on the canvas indicates that the canvas was sold by William Legg, who didn't begin selling canvas until Jane was older than the girl in the portrait.

Responses with scores of 4 and 5 typically discuss all three points in the table.

Sample Response

The lecture casts doubt and questions the evidence presented in the reading passage regarding a painting allegedly of Jane Austen.

First, about the family's recognition of the painting as that of Jane's as a teenager. The lecturer points out that in 1882, when the Austen family authorized the use of the painting as a portrait of Jane in the publication of her letters, Jane had been dead for 70 years. Hence, the family members who claimed this portrait to be of Jane's probably have never seen her, and don't necessarily know how she looked.

While the reading passage presents the resemblance of the face features to prove that the teenager in the portrait is indeed Jane, the lecturer sees otherwise: the teenager in the portrait could have been any cousin or niece of Jane. The lecturer claims that there was much

to the date of the portrait based on the stamp on the canvas itself. According to the stamp it was sold by William Legg, who didn't sell canvas in London when Jane was a teenager. He only began selling canvas in London when Jane was 27 years old.

Rater Comments

This response earns a score of 5. It is a well organized response that successfully explains the opposing relationship between the reading and the lecture. The three main points from the lecture are clearly identified, and the writer has provided relevant details for each of those main points. One detail about the second point is presented with a minor inaccuracy – MaryAnn Campion is described by the lecturer as a niece, not a cousin, of Jane Austen – but overall the writer's coverage of this point is sufficient to achieve the highest score. The very few language errors in the response do not interfere with the clear

presentation of the essential content from the reading and lecture.

Question 2

Prompt

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

It is better to have broad knowledge of many academic subjects than to specialize in one specific subject.

Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

Topic Notes

This topic requires that you compare two approaches to knowledge. For either approach you choose to write about, you should present and develop reasons for preferring this approach. As you do so, it may be helpful to identify the particular aspect or aspects of your life in which you think your choice would benefit you most; for example, if you indicate that it is better to specialize, you could explain that this will help you economically (for example, if you are studying to be a doctor and choose certain areas of specialization, you will probably make more money than if you were a general practitioner). By the same token, if you indicate that it is better to take broad knowledge, you could explain that this will help you be a well-rounded person who can enjoy exploring many interests. If you believe that broad knowledge and specialization are equally important, it might be helpful to explain how having broad knowledge will be very useful in certain aspects of your life, while having specialized knowledge will be very useful in other aspects of your life.

Sample Response

To answer this question it seems to be necessary to make clear, for what aspect of life the knowledge in general should be good. On the one hand you might think that knowledge should be useful for the success in your job or at school. On the other hand you may be understand knowledge as a part of the human

existence, that allows us to think critically and to reflect about our life which includes the whole environment surrounding us.

I want to respond the question from the second point of view. Knowledge has to be understood as much more than the ability to function in a special kind of business environment. Knowledge is the sum of all the theoretical facts and experiences a human being collects during his or her whole life. And from this position a knowledge as broad as possible must be accepted as the better alternative.

I think that it will become a very big problem in our society when we continue to concentrate the whole educational system – especially the schools – only on teaching specific subjects. Of course it is actually is very important for young people to have the right preparation for the business world. But as I already said, life must focus on much more than the economic aspect.

Even if you think that the preparation for the business world should be the main aspect of acquiring knowledge, you should still agree with the statement, because when you really analyse the requirements of work that are typical in our time, you will realize that the technologies and the methods change so quickly, that it would be a very big mistake to concentrate on a specific subject. You would always have the danger that if you concentrate on a specialized part of human knowledge, that part might become completely unimportant in the nearest future. Nowadays it seems to be useful to be able to program computers. Yet in some years computers might have the ability to program themselves.

When you have a broad knowledge than you will be able to handle all the new things that you might get confronted with. And you will not only be able to handle them – but you will have the possibility to fully understand them and take part in their development. Not only as a passive part but as a creator of your own future.

Rater Comments

The writer of this 5-level response argues in favor of having broad knowledge. The response begins by examining some different purposes of acquiring knowledge and identifies different areas or aspects of life in which we use knowledge, and then goes on to acknowledge that while acquiring specialized knowledge is useful for success at work or school, it is the other type of knowledge, broad knowledge, which is best to have. In the beginning of the response, this writer has associated this type of knowledge with critical thinking

skills. The writer then goes on to argue that if we decide to pursue specialized knowledge, there is the risk that it may become obsolete. The response comes back to the idea of critical thinking skills being most valuable after the writer has presented a scenario about what would happen if somebody pursues the kind of knowledge that the writer is not coming out in favor of in this response. Although the concluding remark contains an error in structure, there are many instances of good facility with language use in the response.