

REALITIES AND MYTHS OF SUBJECT A

The following quotes come from the Information Booklet for the University wide Subject A Examination and explain the design and expectations for this test.

They are followed by common myths.

The Subject A requires students “to read thoughtfully and to provide reasoned, concrete, and developed presentations of their points of view, not unsubstantiated statements of agreement or disagreement”

- Examples from the canon of literature and references to other core academic subjects are impressive and necessary.
- A strong stance—pro or con—is typically required.

One possible Subject A topic “encourages students to draw on knowledge and experience from outside the reading passage. It asks students to explain the passage’s thought on an important point and to respond to that thought by evaluating it in light of their own experience or observation, by comparing it with their own reading, or by testing the writer’s assumptions against their own.”

- Writers should not use first person.
- All examples must come from my own personal experience.
- I may be “marked down” for asserting my own opinions.
- There is a right and wrong answer to Subject A.

“The Subject A provides students with a prose passage...[that]concerns an issues accessible to all freshmen....After reading the passage, students write an essay responding to a single topic based on the passage’s content.”

- The Subject A is only a writing exam.

Students “must also demonstrate their writers’ ability to control a range of vocabulary appropriate for beginning college students, to manage varied syntax accurately and appropriately, and to observe the conventions of standard written English.”

- Writers must use an advanced, highly academic vocabulary.