



## Literacy at Hartford Public High School

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### Previewing a Selection

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for Assessment

Reading exams, including standardized tests, usually consist of informative and/or literary passages followed by questions about those passages. Previewing a selection, or looking at it before you read it in depth, can improve your understanding a great deal. Previewing a passage helps you to...

1. understand what kind of passage it is (e.g., a story, a fable, a news report, an essay, an explanation, etc.)
2. determine how the passage is organized
3. identify the subject matter of the passage
4. focus your attention on the task at hand
5. establish a meaningful context for your in-depth reading

### Elements Commonly Found In Short Pieces of Writing

1. The title of a piece will often tell you, generally what it is about. The title may tell you not only what the subject of the piece is but also suggest the work's main idea.
2. The name of the author usually appears after the title.
3. The text of a piece of writing is simply the words that make it up.
4. On reading exams, there will be a direction line telling you to read the piece. Often, this direction line will identify the type of piece you are reading, as in "Read the article and then answer questions 1 through 7."
5. Headings are the subtitles that appear within a piece. These mark the major parts of a piece and can indicate the major topics and supporting ideas in the piece.
6. Illustrations are any pieces or graphics reproduced with a work. Maps, pie charts,

drawings, and photographs are all examples of illustrations

7. Often writers and publishers emphasize key terms—words that are especially important, that are unique to the subject, or that are defined in the text—by printing them in special type. Such key terms might be boldfaced, written in italics, or highlighted in a different color.
8. Footnotes might appear at the bottom of pages, presenting definitions of difficult or unfamiliar words or other important clarifying information. If these appear at the end of a selection, they are called endnotes.
9. A prose piece will be written in paragraphs. A paragraph is a group of related sentences, the first of which is usually indented. Often a paragraph will contain a topic sentence—which may be the first sentence—that expresses its main idea. It may also contain a clincher sentence at the end that sums up or presents the point of the rest of the paragraph.
10. Most pieces will contain three major parts: an introduction at the beginning that grabs the reader's attention and introduces the subject and the main idea or thesis; a body that presents material to support the thesis; and a conclusion that sums up the selection or makes a final statement about the subject.

### Words to Know

|                 |                |
|-----------------|----------------|
| boldface        | illustration   |
| caption         | introduction   |
| clinch sentence | italics        |
| conclusion      | key term       |
| direction line  | paragraph      |
| endnote         | selection      |
| excerpt         | text           |
| footnote        | thesis         |
| heading         | title          |
| highlighted     | topic sentence |