Worksheet Four: How Test Writers Do It and How You Can Too

Standardized test-writers write your questions on only what is provided to them. Sources from which they write are strict sets of “standards” from “curriculum frameworks” or words to that effect. These are based on things that state and federal departments of education deem that everyone should know – agreed upon canons of knowledge, or what-have-you. You can write your own questions from the same material. This is especially helpful if you don’t get to learn this material in school but will still be tested on it.

Of course, you are expected to learn this stuff before you are tested on it. But in case that doesn’t happen, this method allows you to build on and bypass any particular school’s curriculum. You and your family can do yourselves, wherever and whenever you want.

1. **Look at the “standards” and “curriculum frameworks” for each test you take. This is exactly what standardized test writers get. (To be provided.)**
2. **Begin by selecting any words/terms/ideas/standards[1] that links to any of your family stories from Worksheet 1. You can skip over things that you got enough on Worksheets 2 and 3.[2]**
3. **Add any things you want to study. By now, you will have explored so many things that you will have plenty more to explore.**
4. **Write[3] your own questions based on these words/terms/ideas/standards standards. Use the formats[4] that test-writers use, like “multiple-choice, “short essay,” and so on.**
5. **Answer them.[5] And so on...**

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[1] In particular, check the highlighted portions that really target the precise information a test-writer needs to know to do his or her job accurately and well. Things that will come up will be familiar from the tests you have already done. It will also re-fire your brain in areas of knowledge that you have, or haven't accessed lately, and to make connections among what you know, should have been taught, and have now learned on your own.

[2] Of course, you will use the questions you already found as models. Often you can simply replace key words/phrases/facts.

[3] Writing questions is quite as – sometimes more – edifying as answering them. Writing helps you to chunk-up the material into manageable, concept-clear pieces and focus on them. Learning how to write multiple-choice questions is helpful in knowing such things as what parts offer clues, what is exactly right, misleading, false, and patently false. Items that ask you to write can range from a word to a complete essay (sometimes five, but more often three paragraphs). Today, we see more short-writing formats, that may ask you to do such things as write one to three sentences (three being preferable.)

[4] Look for the main types, as well as any particularities that give you a heads-up. For instance, some standardized tests have four-item multiple choice questions, and others none. Sometimes you simply have to choose between two answers, or to indicate which one is false. Some short-item writing answers are termed such things as "brief writing" or short paragraph. Writing different question types gives you a chance to consider the information from many different ways of thinking about it.

[5] For instance, Sam couldn’t find anything much at all about world history in the Massachusetts tests he studied. He knows there will be a some questions on that as soon as the history tests come out (piloted/ given 2016-17). He can get a jump on them.