Constructed Responses

How to succeed with the new standards.
There are some simple steps that you can take to construct written responses to short answer questions.
Short Answer vs. Extended Response

Short answer questions
• Usually require you to give two facts or pieces of information.

Extended Responses
• Usually require you to give four or more facts or pieces of information.
Short Answer Basics

Assume you have been given a paragraph or short article to read. You may be given a prompt like the following:

*Explain a purpose the author may have had in writing this article. Use examples from the text to support your answer.*
Notice that there are two actions you are going to be expected to perform in your response:

*Explain a purpose the author may have had in writing this article. Use examples from the text to support your answer.*
Find the two tasks in this prompt:

Explain what is meant when the poet writes, “my image stood before me,/acted on by fifty years” (stanza 2). Use information from the text to support your answer.
Now try this one:

Describe how the student achieved the outstanding grade by staying focused and determined. Provide examples from personal experience to support your answer.
Once you have identified the actions you must take, it’s time to begin a three-step plan to formulate your answer.
Step 1 – Analyze and Plan

Look at the first action you identified in the prompt. If it’s...

...**compare** – identify similarities and differences between two things.

...**describe** – give characteristics of something, including ideas and events. You may also be asked to show how something changes or changed over time.

...**explain** – make clear or give reasons for something: *how* something happens, tell the way in which it occurs; *why* something happens, give reasons why it occurs; the *effects* of something, describe each effect and how it came about.
Step 1 – Analyze and Plan

...**evaluate** – determine the value or worth of something.

...**identify** – name something or tell what something is.

...**summarize** – restate information in a shorter form by naming only what is most important.

...**support** – give facts, examples and other evidence to justify a conclusion, generalization, or point of view.
Step 1 – Analyze and Plan

• Identify all parts of the question

• Plan your answer by jotting down notes and organizing them in a coherent manner.
Step 2 – Write Your Answer

• Organize your notes and thoughts.
• Write a one-sentence summary of your answer. This will be your thesis statement and the first sentence of your response.
• Write separate sentences for each supporting idea. In general, it is best to keep these as simple sentences, but you may combine related ideas in well-constructed and correctly-punctuated complex and compound sentences.
• Write a concluding sentence which should restate but not repeat exactly, the thesis statement.
Step 3 – Review and Revise

- Read your answer for coherence and completeness.

- Review your answer to be sure you have done the following:
  - Follow directions of the question and complete all its parts.
  - Provided enough details, examples, and reasons to support your answer.
  - Provided an appropriate conclusion.
For Practice:

One of the recurring themes of *The Hunger Games* is “paybacks.” List examples of characters who feel as though they owed another character something. Explain how these incidences affected the outcome of the games.