

SESSION TWO

The University of the State of New York

REGENTS HIGH SCHOOL EXAMINATION

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

IN

ENGLISH

SESSION TWO

Friday, June 15, 2001 — 9:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m., only

The last page of this booklet is the answer sheet for the multiple-choice questions. Fold the last page along the perforations and, slowly and carefully, tear off the answer sheet. Then fill in the heading of your answer sheet. Now circle “Session Two” and fill in the heading of each page of your essay booklet.

This session of the examination has two parts. For Part A, you are to answer all ten multiple-choice questions and write a response, as directed. For Part B, you are to write a response, as directed.

When you have completed this session of the examination, you must sign the statement printed at the end of the answer sheet, indicating that you had no unlawful knowledge of the questions or answers prior to the session and that you have neither given nor received assistance in answering any of the questions during the session. Your answer sheet cannot be accepted if you fail to sign this declaration.

DO NOT OPEN THIS EXAMINATION BOOKLET UNTIL THE SIGNAL IS GIVEN.

Part A

Directions: Read the passages on the following pages (a short story and an excerpt from an autobiography). Write the number of the answer to each multiple-choice question on your answer sheet. Then write the essay in your essay booklet as described in **Your Task**. You may use the margins to take notes as you read and scrap paper to plan your response.

Your Task:

After you have read the passages and answered the multiple-choice questions, write a unified essay about the meaning of human dignity, as revealed in the passages. In your essay, use ideas from **both** passages to establish a controlling idea about the meaning of human dignity. Using evidence from **each** passage, develop your controlling idea and show how the author uses specific literary elements or techniques to convey that idea.

Guidelines:

Be sure to

- Use ideas from **both** passages to establish a controlling idea about the meaning of human dignity
- Use specific and relevant evidence from **each** passage to develop your controlling idea
- Show how each author uses specific literary elements (for example: theme, characterization, structure, point of view) or techniques (for example: symbolism, irony, figurative language) to convey the controlling idea
- Organize your ideas in a logical and coherent manner
- Use language that communicates ideas effectively
- Follow the conventions of standard written English

Passage I

Mashenka Pavletsky, a young girl who had only just finished her studies at a boarding school, returning from a walk to the house of the Kushkins, with whom she was living as a governess, found the household in a terrible turmoil. Mihailo, the porter who opened the door to her, was excited and red as a crab.

5 Loud voices were heard from upstairs.

“Madame Kushkin is in a fit, most likely, or else she has quarreled with her husband,” thought Mashenka.

In the hall and in the corridor she met maidservants. One of them was crying. Then Mashenka saw, running out of her room, Madame Kushkin’s husband,
10 Nikolay Sergeitch, a little man with a flabby face and a bald head. He was red in the face and twitching all over. He passed the governess without noticing her, and throwing up his arms, exclaimed:

“Oh, how horrible it is! How tactless! How stupid! How barbarous! Abominable!”

15 Mashenka went into her room, and then, for the first time in her life, it was her lot to experience in all its acuteness the feeling that is so familiar to persons in dependent positions, who eat the bread of the rich and powerful, and cannot speak their minds. There was a search going on in her room. The lady of the house, Madame Fenya Kushkin, a stout, broad-shouldered, uncouth woman, was
20 standing at the table, putting back into Mashenka’s workbag balls of wool, scraps of materials, and bits of paper. . . . Evidently the governess’s arrival took her by surprise, since, on looking round and seeing the girl’s pale and astonished face, she was a little taken aback, and muttered:

“*Pardon*. I . . . I upset it accidentally. . . . My sleeve caught in it. . . .”

25 And saying something more, Madame Kushkin rustled her long skirts and went out. Mashenka looked round her room with wondering eyes, and, unable to understand it, not knowing what to think, shrugged her shoulders, and turned cold with dismay. What had Madame Kushkin been looking for in her workbag? If she really had, as she said, caught her sleeve in it and upset everything, why
30 had Nikolay Sergeitch, the master of the house, dashed out of her room so excited, and red in the face? Why was one drawer of the table pulled out a little way? The whatnot with her books on it, the things on the table, the bed—all bore fresh traces of a search. Her linen-basket, too. The linen had been carefully folded, but it was not in the same order as Mashenka had left it when she went
35 out. So the search had been thorough, most thorough. But what was it for? Why? What had happened? Was not she mixed up in something dreadful? Mashenka turned pale, and feeling cold all over, sank on to her linen-basket.

A maidservant came into the room.

40 “Liza, you don’t know why they have been rummaging in my room?” the governess asked her.

“Mistress has lost a brooch worth two thousand,” said Liza. “She has been rummaging in everything with her own hands. She even searched Mihailo, the porter, herself. It’s a perfect disgrace! But you’ve no need to tremble like that, miss. They found nothing here. You’ve nothing to be afraid of if you didn’t take
45 the brooch.”

“But, Liza, it’s vile . . . it’s insulting,” said Mashenka, breathless with indignation. “It’s so mean, so low! What right had she to suspect me and to rummage in my things?”

50 “You are living with strangers, miss,” sighed Liza. “Though you are a young lady, still you are . . . as it were . . . a servant. . . . It’s not like living with your papa and mamma.”

Mashenka threw herself on the bed and sobbed bitterly. Never in her life had she been subjected to such an outrage, never had she been so deeply insulted. . . . She, well-educated, refined, the daughter of a teacher, was suspected of theft; she
55 could not imagine a greater insult.

“Dinner is ready,” the servant summoned Mashenka.

Mashenka brushed her hair, wiped her face with a wet towel, and went into the dining-room. There they had already begun dinner. At one end of the table sat Madame Kushkin with a stupid, solemn, serious face; at the other end Nikolay
60 Sergeitch. Everyone knew that there was an upset in the house, that Madame Kushkin was in trouble, and everyone was silent. Nothing was heard but the sound of munching and the rattle of spoons on the plates.

The lady of the house, herself, was the first to speak.

65 “It’s not the two thousand I regret,” said the lady, and a big tear rolled down her cheek. “It’s the fact itself that revolts me! I cannot put up with thieves in my house. That’s how they repay me for my kindness. . . .”

They all looked into their plates, but Mashenka fancied after the lady’s words that every one was looking at her. A lump rose in her throat; she began crying and put her handkerchief to her lips.

70 “*Pardon*,” she muttered. “I can’t help it. My head aches. I’ll go away.”

And she got up from the table, scraping her chair awkwardly, and went out quickly.

“It really was unsuitable, Fenya,” said Nikolay Sergeitch, frowning. “Excuse me, Fenya, but you’ve no kind of legal right to make a search.”

75 “I know nothing about your laws. All I know is that I’ve lost my brooch. And I will find the brooch!” She brought her fork down on the plate with a clatter, and her eyes flashed angrily. “And you eat your dinner, and don’t interfere in what doesn’t concern you!”

80 Nikolay Sergeitch dropped his eyes mildly and sighed. Meanwhile Mashenka, reaching her room, flung herself on her bed.

There was only one thing left to do—to get away as quickly as possible, not to stay another hour in this place. It was true it was terrible to lose her place, to go back to her parents, who had nothing; but what could she do? Mashenka could not bear the sight of the lady of the house nor of her little room; she felt stifled
85 and wretched here. Mashenka jumped up from the bed and began packing.

“May I come in?” asked Nikolay Sergeitch at the door; he had come up noiselessly to the door, and spoke in a soft, subdued voice. “May I?”

“Come in.”

90 He came in and stood still near the door. “What’s this?” he asked, pointing to the basket.

“I am packing. Forgive me, Nikolay Sergeitch, but I cannot remain in your house. I feel deeply insulted by this search!”

“I understand, of course, but you must make allowances. You know my wife is nervous, headstrong; you mustn’t judge her too harshly.”

95 Mashenka did not speak.

“If you are so offended,” Nikolay Sergeitch went on, “well, if you like, I’m ready to apologize. I ask your pardon.”

“I know it’s not your fault, Nikolay Sergeitch,” said Mashenka, looking him full in the face with her big tear-stained eyes. “Why should you worry yourself?”

100 “I took my wife’s brooch,” Nikolay Sergeitch said quickly.

Mashenka, amazed and frightened, went on packing. “It’s nothing to wonder at,” Nikolay Sergeitch went on after a pause. “It’s an everyday story! I need money, and she . . . won’t give it to me. It was my father’s money that bought this house and everything, you know! It’s all mine, and the brooch belonged to my mother, and . . . it’s all mine! And she took it, took possession of everything. . . . I beg you most earnestly, overlook it . . . stay on. Will you stay?”

105 “No!” said Mashenka resolutely, beginning to tremble. “Let me alone, I entreat you!”

110 “Then you won’t stay?” asked Nikolay Sergeitch. “Stay! If you go, there won’t be a human face left in the house. It’s awful!”

Nikolay Sergeitch’s pale, exhausted face besought her, but Mashenka shook her head, and with a wave of his hand he went out.

Half an hour later she was on her way.

—Anton Chekhov

Passage II

She was a small woman, old and wrinkled. When she started washing for us, she was already past seventy. Most women of her age were sickly, weak, broken in body. All the old women in our street had bent backs and leaned on sticks when they walked. But this washwoman, small and thin as she was, possessed a strength that came from generations of peasant forebears. Mother would count out to her a bundle of laundry that had accumulated over several weeks. She would lift the unwieldy pack, load it on her narrow shoulders, and carry it the long way home. It must have been a walk of an hour and a half.

She would bring the laundry back about two weeks later. My mother had never been so pleased with any washwoman. Every piece of linen sparkled like polished silver. Every piece was neatly ironed. Yet she charged no more than the others. She was a real find. Mother always had her money ready, because it was too far for the old woman to come a second time.

Laundering was not easy in those days. The old woman had no faucet where she lived but had to bring in the water from a pump. For the linens to come out so clean, they had to be scrubbed thoroughly in a washtub, rinsed with washing soda, soaked, boiled in an enormous pot, starched, then ironed. Every piece was handled ten times or more. And the drying! It could not be done outside because thieves would steal the laundry. The wrung-out wash had to be carried up to the attic and hung on clotheslines. In the winter it would become as brittle as glass and almost break when touched. Only God knows all the old woman had to endure each time she did a wash!

That winter was a harsh one. The streets were in the grip of a bitter cold. No matter how much we heated our stove, the windows were covered with frostwork and decorated with icicles. The newspapers reported that people were dying of the cold. Coal became dear. The winter had become so severe that even the schools were closed.

On one such day the washwoman, now nearly eighty years old, came to our house. A good deal of laundry had accumulated during the past weeks. Mother gave her a pot of tea to warm herself, as well as some bread. The old woman sat on a kitchen chair, trembling and shaking, and warmed her hands against the teapot. Her fingers were gnarled from work, and perhaps from arthritis too. These hands spoke of the stubbornness of mankind, of the will to work not only as one's strength permits but beyond the limits of one's power. Mother counted and wrote down the list: men's undershirts, women's vests, long-legged drawers, bloomers, petticoats, shifts, featherbed covers, pillowcases, and sheets.

The bundle was big, bigger than usual. When the woman placed it on her shoulders, it covered her completely. At first she swayed, as though she were about to fall under the load. But an inner obstinacy seemed to call out: No, you may not fall. A donkey may permit himself to fall under his burden, but not a human being, the crown of creation.

It was fearful to watch the old woman staggering out with the enormous pack, out into the frost, where the snow was dry as salt and the air was filled with dusty white whirlwinds, like goblins dancing in the cold. Would the old woman ever reach home?

She disappeared, and Mother sighed and prayed for her.

Usually the woman brought back the wash after two or, at the most, three weeks. But three weeks passed, then four and five, and nothing was heard of the old woman.

50 One evening, while Mother was sitting near the kerosene lamp mend-
ing a shirt, the door opened and a small puff of steam, followed by a gigan-
tic bundle, entered. Under the bundle tottered the old woman, her face as
white as a linen sheet. Mother uttered a half-choked cry. It was as though a
corpse had entered the room. I ran toward the old woman and helped her
55 unload her pack. She was even thinner now, more bent. Her face had
become more gaunt, and her head shook from side to side as though she
were saying no. She could not utter a clear word, but mumbled something
with her sunken mouth and pale lips.

After the old woman had recovered somewhat, she told us that she had
60 been ill, very ill. She had been so sick that someone had called a doctor, and
the doctor had sent for a priest. Someone had informed the son, and he had
contributed money for a coffin and for the funeral. But the Almighty had
not yet wanted to take this pain-racked soul to himself. She began to feel
better, she became well, and as soon as she was able to stand on her feet
65 once more, she resumed her washing. Not just ours, but the wash of several
other families too.

“I could not rest easy in my bed because of the wash,” the old woman
explained. “The wash would not let me die.”

70 “With the help of God you will live to be a hundred and twenty,” said my
mother, as a benediction.

“God forbid! What good would such a long life be? The work becomes
harder and harder . . . my strength is leaving me . . . I do not want to be a
burden on anyone!” The old woman muttered and crossed herself and
raised her eyes toward heaven. Then she left, promising to return in a few
75 weeks for a new load of wash.

But she never came back. The wash she had returned was her last effort
on this earth. She had been driven by an indomitable will to return the
property to its rightful owners, to fulfill the task she had undertaken.

—Issac Singer

Multiple-Choice Questions

Directions (1–10): Select the best suggested answer to each question and write its number in the space provided on the answer sheet. The questions may help you think about the ideas and information you might want to use in your essay. You may return to these questions anytime you wish.

Passage I (the short story) — Questions 1–5 refer to Passage I.

- 1 The confusion Mashenka encounters upon returning to the Kushkin household was caused by the theft of
 - (1) money
 - (2) jewelry
 - (3) a linen-basket
 - (4) a portrait
- 2 From the events in the story, what feeling is Mashenka most likely referring to in lines 15 through 18?
 - (1) guilt
 - (2) gratitude
 - (3) humiliation
 - (4) fear
- 3 Which word best describes the character of Madame Kushkin?
 - (1) domineering
 - (2) dignified
 - (3) courageous
 - (4) independent
- 4 What reason did Nikolay Sergeitch give for stealing the brooch?
 - (1) He wanted his wife to be blamed for the theft.
 - (2) He wanted to give the brooch to Mashenka.
 - (3) He felt the brooch had no real value.
 - (4) He felt the brooch was rightfully his.
- 5 In choosing to leave the Kushkin household, Mashenka displays an attitude of
 - (1) regret
 - (2) apology
 - (3) self-respect
 - (4) ill humor

Passage II (the excerpt from an autobiography) — Questions 6–10 refer to Passage II.

- 6 The author's description in lines 9 through 13 has the effect of emphasizing the
 - (1) difficulty of pleasing his mother
 - (2) washwoman's pride in her work
 - (3) fee for the washwoman's services
 - (4) author's status in the village
- 7 The author most likely describes the details of laundering (lines 14 through 22) in order to
 - (1) highlight the difficulty of the task
 - (2) reveal his own familiarity with laundering
 - (3) contrast the washwoman's life with that of his family
 - (4) identify the setting of the story
- 8 In lines 32 through 34, the author uses the washwoman's hands as a metaphor for
 - (1) prayer
 - (2) humility
 - (3) forgiveness
 - (4) endurance
- 9 In line 39, the word "obstinacy" most nearly means
 - (1) stubbornness
 - (2) honesty
 - (3) warning
 - (4) temptation
- 10 In lines 67 and 68, the washwoman implies that she refused to die because of her
 - (1) need for money
 - (2) sense of duty
 - (3) longing for respect
 - (4) love of work

After you have finished these questions, turn to page 2. Review **Your Task** and the **Guidelines**. Use scrap paper to plan your response. Then write your response to Part A, beginning on page 1 in your essay booklet. After you finish your response for Part A, go on to page 9 of your examination booklet and complete Part B.

Part B

Your Task:

Write a critical essay in which you discuss **two** works of literature you have read from the particular perspective of the statement that is provided for you in the **Critical Lens**. In your essay, provide a valid interpretation of the statement, agree **or** disagree with the statement as you have interpreted it, and support your opinion using specific references to appropriate literary elements from the two works. You may use scrap paper to plan your response. Write your essay in Part B, beginning on page 7 of your essay booklet.

Critical Lens:

“All conflict in literature is, in its simplest form, a struggle between good and evil.”

Guidelines:

Be sure to

- Provide a valid interpretation of the critical lens that clearly establishes the criteria for analysis
- Indicate whether you agree **or** disagree with the statement as you have interpreted it
- Choose **two** works you have read that you believe best support your opinion
- Use the criteria suggested by the critical lens to analyze the works you have chosen
- Avoid plot summary. Instead, use specific references to appropriate literary elements (for example: theme, characterization, setting, point of view) to develop your analysis
- Organize your ideas in a unified and coherent manner
- Specify the titles and authors of the literature you choose
- Follow the conventions of standard written English

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ANSWER SHEET

Student Sex: Male Female

School Grade Teacher

Write your answers to the multiple-choice questions for Part A on this answer sheet.

Part A

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____
- 7 _____
- 8 _____
- 9 _____
- 10 _____



**HAND IN THIS ANSWER SHEET WITH YOUR ESSAY BOOKLET,
SCRAP PAPER, AND EXAMINATION BOOKLET.**

Your essay responses for Part A and Part B should be written in the essay booklet.

I do hereby affirm, at the close of this examination, that I had no unlawful knowledge of the questions or answers prior to the examination and that I have neither given nor received assistance in answering any of the questions during the examination.

Signature

Tear Here

Tear Here

Tear Here