

SESSION TWO

The University of the State of New York

REGENTS HIGH SCHOOL EXAMINATION

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

IN

ENGLISH

SESSION TWO

Thursday, June 19, 2003 — 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 poem and an essay). 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 lessons from childhood as revealed in the passages. In your essay, use ideas from **both** passages to establish a controlling idea about lessons from childhood. 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 lessons from childhood
- 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

The Thing You Must Remember

The thing you must remember is how, as a child,
you worked hours in the art room, the teacher's
hands over yours, molding the little clay dog.
You must remember, how nothing mattered
5 but the imagined dog's fur, the shape of his ears
and his paws. The gray clay felt dangerous,
your small hands were pressing what you couldn't
say with your limited words. When the dog's back
stiffened, then cracked to white shards
10 in the kiln, you learned how the beautiful
suffers from too much attention, how clumsy
a single vision can grow, and fragile
with trying too hard. The thing you must
remember is the art teacher's capable
15 hands: large, rough and grainy,
over yours, holding on.

—Maggie Anderson
from *Windfall*, 2000
University of Pittsburgh Press

Passage II

She was only about five feet tall and probably never weighed more than 110 pounds, but Miss Bessie was a towering presence in the classroom. She was the only woman tough enough to make me read *Beowulf* and think for a few foolish days that I liked it. From 1938 to 1942, when I attended Bernard High School in
5 McMinnville, Tenn., she taught me English, history, civics—and a lot more than I realized.

I shall never forget the day she scolded me into reading *Beowulf*.

“But Miss Bessie,” I complained, “I ain’t much interested in it.”

Her large brown eyes became daggerish slits. “Boy,” she said, “how dare you
10 say ‘ain’t’ to me! I’ve taught you better than that.”

“Miss Bessie,” I pleaded, “I’m trying to make first-string end on the football team, and if I go around saying ‘it isn’t’ and ‘they aren’t,’ the guys are gonna laugh me off the squad.”

“Boy,” she responded, “you’ll play football because you have guts. But do you
15 know what *really* takes guts? Refusing to lower your standards to those of the crowd. It takes guts to say you’ve got to live and be somebody fifty years after all the football games are over.”

I started saying “it isn’t” and “they aren’t,” and I still made first-string end—and class valedictorian—without losing my buddies’ respect.

20 During her remarkable 44-year career, Mrs. Bessie Taylor Gwynn taught hundreds of economically deprived black youngsters—including my mother, my brother, my sisters and me. I remember her now with gratitude and affection—especially in this era when Americans are so wrought-up about a “rising tide of mediocrity” in public education and the problems of finding competent, caring
25 teachers. Miss Bessie was an example of an informed, dedicated teacher, a blessing to children and an asset to the nation.

Born in 1895, in poverty, she grew up in Athens, Ala., where there was no public school for blacks. She attended Trinity School, a private institution for blacks run by the American Missionary Association, and in 1911 graduated from
30 the Normal School (a “super” high school) at Fisk University in Nashville. Mrs. Gwynn, the essence of pride and privacy, never talked about her years in Athens; only in the months before her death did she reveal that she had never attended Fisk University itself because she could not afford the four-year course.

At Normal School she learned a lot about Shakespeare, but most of all about
35 the profound importance of education—especially, for a people trying to move up from slavery. “What you put in your head, boy,” she once said, “can never be pulled out by the Ku Klux Klan, the Congress or anybody.”

Miss Bessie’s bearing of dignity told anyone who met her that she was
40 “educated” in the best sense of the word. There was never a discipline problem in her classes. We didn’t dare mess with a woman who knew about the Battle of Hastings, the Magna Charta and the Bill of Rights—and who could also play the piano.

This frail-looking woman could make sense of Shakespeare, Milton, Voltaire, and bring to life Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. DuBois. Believing that it was
45 important to know who the officials were that spent taxpayers’ money and made public policy, she made us memorize the names of everyone on the Supreme

Court and in the President's Cabinet. It could be embarrassing to be unprepared when Miss Bessie said, "Get up and tell the class who Frances Perkins is and what you think about her."

50 Miss Bessie knew that my family, like so many others during the Depression, couldn't afford to subscribe to a newspaper. She knew we didn't even own a radio. Still, she prodded me to "look out for your future and find some way to keep up with what's going on in the world." So I became a delivery boy for the Chattanooga *Times*. I rarely made a dollar a week, but I got to read a newspaper
55 every day.

Miss Bessie noticed things that had nothing to do with schoolwork, but were vital to a youngster's development. Once a few classmates made fun of my frayed, hand-me-down overcoat, calling me "Strings." As I was leaving school, Miss Bessie patted me on the back of that old overcoat and said, "Carl, never fret about
60 what you *don't* have. Just make the most of what you *do* have—a brain."

Among the things that I did not have was electricity in the little frame house that my father had built for \$400 with his World War I bonus. But because of her inspiration, I spent many hours squinting beside a kerosene lamp reading Shakespeare and Thoreau, Samuel Pepys and William Cullen Bryant.

65 No one in my family had ever graduated from high school, so there was no tradition of commitment to learning for me to lean on. Like millions of youngsters in today's ghettos and barrios, I needed the push and stimulation of a teacher who truly cared. Miss Bessie gave plenty of both, as she immersed me in a wonderful world of similes, metaphors and even onomatopoeia. She led me to believe that I
70 could write sonnets as well as Shakespeare, or iambic-pentameter verse to put Alexander Pope to shame.

In those days the McMinnville school system was rigidly "Jim Crow," and poor black children had to struggle to put anything in their heads. Our high school was only slightly larger than the once-typical little red schoolhouse, and its library was
75 outrageously inadequate—so small, I like to say, that if two students were in it and one wanted to turn a page, the other one had to step outside.

Negroes, as we were called then, were not allowed in the town library, except to mop floors or dust tables. But through one of those secret Old South arrangements between whites of conscience and blacks of stature, Miss Bessie
80 kept getting books smuggled out of the white library. That is how she introduced me to the Brontës, Byron, Coleridge, Keats and Tennyson. "If you don't read, you can't write, and if you can't write, you might as well stop dreaming," Miss Bessie once told me.

So I read whatever Miss Bessie told me to, and tried to remember the things
85 she insisted that I store away. Forty-five years later, I can still recite her "truths to live by," such as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's lines from "The Ladder of St. Augustine":

The heights by great men reached and kept
Were not attained by sudden flight,
90 But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upward in the night.

Years later, her inspiration, prodding, anger, cajoling and almost osmotic infusion of learning finally led to that lovely day when Miss Bessie dropped me a note saying, "I'm so proud to read your column in the Nashville *Tennessean*."

95 Miss Bessie was a spry 80 when I went back to McMinnville and visited her in
a senior citizens' apartment building. Pointing out proudly that her building was
racially integrated, she reached for two glasses and a pint of bourbon. I was
momentarily shocked, because it would have been scandalous in the 1930s and
100 '40s for word to get out that a teacher drank, and nobody had ever raised a rumor
that Miss Bessie did.

I felt a new sense of equality as she lifted her glass to mine. Then she revealed
a softness and compassion that I had never known as a student.

105 "I've never forgotten that examination day," she said, "when Buster Martin
held up seven fingers, obviously asking you for help with question number seven,
'Name a common carrier.' I can still picture you looking at your exam paper and
humming a few bars of 'Chattanooga Choo Choo.' I was so tickled, I couldn't
punish either of you."

Miss Bessie was telling me, with bourbon-laced grace, that I never fooled her
for a moment.

110 When Miss Bessie died in 1980, at age 85, hundreds of her former students
mourned. They knew the measure of a great teacher: love and motivation. Her
wisdom and influence had rippled out across generations.

115 Some of her students who might normally have been doomed to poverty went
on to become doctors, dentists and college professors. Many, guided by Miss
Bessie's example, became public-school teachers.

120 "The memory of Miss Bessie and how she conducted her classroom did more
for me than anything I learned in college," recalls Gladys Wood of Knoxville,
Tenn., a highly respected English teacher who spent 43 years in the state's school
system. "So many times, when I faced a difficult classroom problem, I asked
myself, *How would Miss Bessie deal with this?* And I'd remember that she would
handle it with laughter and love."

125 No child can get all the necessary support at home, and millions of poor
children get *no* support at all. That is what makes a wise, educated, warm-hearted
teacher like Miss Bessie so vital to the minds, hearts and souls of this country's
children.

— Carl T. Rowan
"Unforgettable Miss Bessie"
from *Reader's Digest*, March 1985

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 poem) — Questions 1–5 refer to Passage I.

- In line 4, the words “how nothing mattered” help to emphasize the child’s
 - fear
 - memory
 - indifference
 - concentration
- The description in lines 6 through 8 conveys the child’s feeling of
 - anxiety
 - control
 - importance
 - resentment
- According to the poem, what is most likely the “thing you must remember”?
 - the broken dog
 - the hard work
 - the teacher’s support
 - the clay’s texture
- The tone of the poem is best described as
 - bitter
 - reflective
 - ironic
 - lively
- What aspect of the poet’s craft suggests that the child and the speaker are the same person?
 - the narrative point of view
 - the simple words
 - the blank verse
 - the irregular line lengths

Passage II (the essay) — Questions 6–10 refer to Passage II.

- Miss Bessie’s remarks about learning correct grammar (lines 7 through 17) stress the importance of
 - participating in sports
 - avoiding peer pressure
 - reading classical literature
 - enforcing team spirit
- In lines 44 through 55, the author’s references to memorization and reading the newspaper serve to emphasize Miss Bessie’s desire that her students be
 - financially independent
 - socially adept
 - emotionally stable
 - politically aware
- The author’s references to the world of poetry (lines 66 through 71) have the effect of stressing Miss Bessie’s power to
 - instill confidence
 - encourage dependence
 - predict events
 - discourage imitation
- Miss Bessie most likely recommended that her students remember Longfellow’s verse to illustrate the value of
 - spiritual discipline
 - regular rest
 - hard work
 - heroic behavior
- The author most likely includes the quotation from Gladys Wood (lines 119 through 121) to emphasize the extent of
 - the author’s grief
 - Miss Bessie’s influence
 - the student’s disobedience
 - Gladys Wood’s success

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 of your essay booklet. After you finish your response for Part A, go on to page 8 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 the essay booklet.

Critical Lens:

“Good people ... are good because they’ve come to wisdom through failure.”

—William Saroyan as quoted in
“Room for Hate—and Hope”
from *New York Journal-American*,
August 23, 1961

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

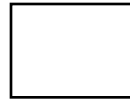
Student Sex: Male Female

School Grade Teacher

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

Part A

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

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Tear Here

Tear Here