

The University of the State of New York

REGENTS HIGH SCHOOL EXAMINATION

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

IN

ENGLISH**SESSION TWO****Wednesday, August 18, 2004 — 8:30 to 11:30 a.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 (an excerpt from a nonfiction work and a poem). 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 natural environment as revealed in the passages. In your essay, use ideas from *both* passages to establish a controlling idea about the natural environment. 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 natural environment
- 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

...With the dusk a strange bird came to the island from its nesting grounds on the outer banks. Its wings were pure black, and from tip to tip their spread was more than the length of a man's arm. It flew steadily and without haste across the sound, its progress as measured and as meaningful as that of the shadows which little by little were dulling the bright water path. The bird was called Rynchops, the black skimmer...

About sunset the tide had been out. Now it was rising, covering the afternoon resting places of the skimmers, moving through the inlet, and flowing up into the marshes. Through most of the night the skimmers would feed, gliding on slender wings above the water in search of the small fishes that had moved in with the tide to the shelter of grassy shallows. Because they fed on the rising tide, the skimmers were called flood gulls.

On the south beach of the island, where water no deeper than a man's hand ran over gently ribbed bottom, Rynchops began to wheel and quarter over the shallows. He flew with a curious, lilted motion, lifting his wings high after the downstroke. His head was bent sharply so that the long lower bill, shaped like a scissor blade, might cut the water.

The blade or cutwater plowed a miniature furrow over the placid sheet of the sound, setting up wavelets of its own and sending vibrations thudding down through the water to rebound from the sandy bottom. The wave messages were received by the blennies and killifish that were roving the shallows on the alert for food. In the fish world many things are told by sound waves. Sometimes the vibrations tell of food animals like small shrimps or oar-footed crustaceans moving in swarms overhead. And so at the passing of the skimmer the small fishes came nosing at the surface, curious and hungry. Rynchops, wheeling about, returned along the way he had come and snapped up three of the fishes by the rapid opening and closing of his short upper bill...

In the waters bordering the island many creatures besides the skimmers were abroad that night, foraging in the shallows. As the darkness grew and the incoming tide lapped higher and higher among the marsh grasses, two diamondback terrapins slipped into the water to join the moving forms of others of their kind. These were females, who had just finished laying their eggs above the high-tide line. They had dug nests in the soft sand, working with hind feet until they scooped out jug-shaped holes not quite so deep as their own bodies were long. Then they had deposited their eggs, one five, the other eight. These they had carefully covered with sand, crawling back and forth to conceal the location of the nest. There were other nests in the sand, but none more than two weeks old, for May is the beginning of the nesting season among the diamondbacks.

As Rynchops followed the killifish in toward the shelter of the marsh he saw the terrapins swimming in the shallow water where the tide was moving swiftly. The terrapins nibbled at the marsh grasses and picked off small coiled snails that had crept up the flat blades. Sometimes they swam down to take crabs off the bottom. One of the two terrapins passed between two slender uprights like stakes thrust into the sand. They were the legs of the solitary great blue heron who flew every night from his rookery three miles away to fish from the island.

The heron stood motionless, his neck curved back on his shoulders, his bill poised to spear fish as they darted past his legs. As the terrapin moved out into deeper water she startled a young mullet and sent it racing toward the beach in confusion and panic. The sharp-eyed heron saw the movement and with a quick

dart seized the fish crosswise in his bill. He tossed it into the air, caught it head first, and swallowed it. It was the first fish other than small fry that he had caught that night....

55 There were many fish moving in through the deep water of the channel that night. They were full-bellied fish, soft-finned and covered with large silvery scales. It was a run of spawning shad, fresh from the sea. For days the shad had lain outside the line of breakers beyond the inlet. Tonight with the rising tide they had moved in past the clanging buoy that guided fishermen returning from the outer grounds, had passed through the inlet, and were crossing the sound by way
60 of the channel....

The fisherman who lived on the island had gone out about nightfall to set the gill nets that he owned with another fisherman from the town. They had anchored a large net almost at right angles to the west shore of the river and extending well out into the stream. All the local fishermen knew from their
65 fathers, who had it from their fathers, that shad coming in from the channel of the sound usually struck in toward the west bank of the river when they entered the shallow estuary, where no channel was kept open. For this reason the west bank was crowded with fixed fishing gear, like pound nets, and the fishermen who operated movable gear competed bitterly for the few remaining places to set their
70 nets....

About midnight, as the tide neared the full, the cork line bobbed as the first of the migrating shad struck the gill net. The line vibrated and several of the cork floats disappeared under the water. The shad, a four-pound roe, had thrust her head through one of the meshes of the net and was struggling to free herself. The
75 taut circle of twine that had slipped under the gill covers cut deeper into the delicate gill filaments as the fish lunged against the net; lunged again to free herself from something that was like a burning, choking collar; something that held her in an invisible vise and would neither let her go on upstream nor turn and seek sanctuary in the sea she had left....

80 By the time the first half-dozen shad had been caught in the net, the eels that lived in the estuary had become aware that a feast was in the offing. Since dusk they had glided with sinuating motion along the banks, thrusting their snouts into crabholes and seizing whatever they could catch in the way of small water creatures. The eels lived partly by their own industry but were also robbers
85 who plundered the fishermen's gill nets when they could....

As the eels poked their heads out of the holes under the roots of the marsh grasses and swayed gently back and forth, savoring eagerly the water that they drew into their mouths, their keen senses caught the taste of fish blood which was diffusing slowly through the water as the gilled shad struggled to escape. One by
90 one they slipped out of their holes and followed the taste trail through the water to the net.

The eels feasted royally that night, since most of the fish caught by the net were roe shad. The eels bit into the abdomens with sharp teeth and ate out the roe. Sometimes they ate out all the flesh as well, so that nothing remained but a
95 bag of skin, with an eel or two inside. The marauders could not catch a live shad free in the river, so their only chance for such a meal was to rob the gill nets....

Although there was as yet no light in the east, the blackness of water and air was perceptibly lessening, as though the darkness that remained were something less solid and impenetrable than that of midnight. A freshening air
100 moved across the sound from the east and, blowing across the receding water, sent little wavelets splashing on the beach....

105 The next time Rynchops flew up the estuary he met the fishermen coming downstream on the ebbing tide, net piled in the boat over some half-dozen shad. All the others had been gutted or reduced to skeletons by the eels. Already gulls were gathering on the water where the gill net had been set, screaming their pleasure over the refuse which the fishermen had thrown overboard.

The tide was ebbing fast, surging through the gutter and running out to sea. As the sun's rays broke through the clouds in the east and sped across the sound, Rynchops turned to follow the racing water seaward.

— Rachel L. Carson
from *Under the Sea-Wind*, 1941
Simon and Schuster

Passage II

In Trackless Woods

In trackless woods, it puzzled me to find
Four great rock maples seemingly aligned,
As if they had been set out in a row
Before some house a century ago,
5 To edge the property and lend some shade.
I looked to see if ancient wheels had made
Old ruts to which these trees ran parallel,
But there were none, so far as I could tell—
There'd been no roadway. Nor could I find the square
10 Depression of a cellar anywhere,
And so I tramped on further, to survey
Amazing patterns in a hornbeam¹ spray
Or spirals in a pinecone, under trees
Not subject to our stiff geometries.

— Richard Wilbur
from *The New Yorker*,
March 31, 2003

¹hornbeam — tree of the birch family

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 excerpt from a nonfiction work) — Questions 1–5 refer to Passage I.

- 1 According to the narrator, black skimmers' feeding habits are connected to the movement of
 - (1) migrating birds
 - (2) incoming tides
 - (3) passing storms
 - (4) fishing boats
- 2 The action of Rynchops' bill (lines 16 through 20) is illustrated through
 - (1) comparisons
 - (2) measurements
 - (3) historical references
 - (4) numerous examples
- 3 According to the narrator, black skimmers create vibrations in order to
 - (1) assess water depth
 - (2) signal danger
 - (3) find their young
 - (4) attract prey
- 4 The phrase "foraging in the shallows" in line 29 suggests that the creatures are
 - (1) finding shelter
 - (2) seeking food
 - (3) digging nests
 - (4) looking for mates
- 5 A key idea implied in this passage is that connections exist between
 - (1) scientists and artists
 - (2) the planets and the tides
 - (3) one animal species and another
 - (4) pollution and climate

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

- 6 The poem uses the word "trackless" (line 1) to introduce a
 - (1) rhyme
 - (2) contrast
 - (3) simile
 - (4) hyperbole
- 7 The narrator is "puzzled" by the four maples because they are
 - (1) at least 100 years old
 - (2) near a large clearing
 - (3) beside an old road
 - (4) in a straight line
- 8 Lines 6 through 10 tell us of the search for evidence of
 - (1) man's altering of nature
 - (2) time's passing in nature
 - (3) nature's effect on man
 - (4) nature's display of mathematics
- 9 In lines 11 through 14 the narrator decides to look for
 - (1) additional varieties of trees
 - (2) further evidence of past dwellers
 - (3) other arrangements in nature
 - (4) another path out of the woods
- 10 The author prepares the reader for the final line by using frequent references to
 - (1) effects of light
 - (2) types of trees
 - (3) surveying
 - (4) mathematics

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:

“A person is a person through other persons...”
— Archbishop Desmond Tutu
(The Right Reverend Desmond Mpilo Tutu)
Hope and Suffering: Sermons and Speeches, 1983

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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SESSION TWO**

Wednesday, August 18, 2004 — 8:30 to 11:30 a.m., only

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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COMPREHENSIVE ENGLISH SESSION TWO

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