

The University of the State of New York

REGENTS HIGH SCHOOL EXAMINATION

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

IN

ENGLISH**SESSION ONE****Wednesday, August 16, 2006 — 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 One” and fill in the heading of each page of your essay booklet.

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

The use of any communications device is strictly prohibited when taking this examination. If you use any communications device, no matter how briefly, your examination will be invalidated and no score will be calculated for you.

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

Part A

Overview: For this part of the test, you will listen to an account about yellow rice, answer some multiple-choice questions, and write a response based on the situation described below. You will hear the account twice. You may take notes on the next page anytime you wish during the readings.

The Situation: Your communications class is studying propaganda. You have been asked to write an essay on one industry's use of propaganda. You have chosen the biotechnology industry. In preparation for writing your essay, listen to an account by Michael Pollan about yellow rice. Then use relevant information from the account to write your essay.

Your Task: Write an essay for your communications class explaining the use of propaganda by the biotechnology industry.

Guidelines:

Be sure to

- Tell your audience what they need to know about the use of propaganda by the biotechnology industry as described by Pollan
- Use specific, accurate, and relevant information from Pollan's account to support your explanation
- Use a tone and level of language appropriate for an essay for a communications class
- Organize your ideas in a logical and coherent manner
- Indicate any words taken directly from the account by using quotation marks or referring to the speaker
- Follow the conventions of standard written English

NOTES

DO NOT TURN THIS PAGE UNTIL YOU ARE TOLD TO DO SO.

Part B

Directions: Read the text and study the time line on the following pages, answer the multiple-choice questions, and write a response based on the situation described below. You may use the margins to take notes as you read and scrap paper to plan your response.

The Situation: Your economics class is studying the effects of consumerism. For a class debate, your teacher has asked you to write a position paper discussing whether consumer culture has had a positive *or* negative impact on society.

Your Task: Using relevant information from *both* documents, write a position paper for your economics class in which you discuss whether consumer culture has had a positive *or* negative impact on society.

Guidelines:

Be sure to

- Tell your audience what they need to know about the impacts of consumer culture
- Discuss whether consumer culture has had a positive *or* negative impact on society
- Use specific, accurate, and relevant information from the text *and* the time line to support your position
- Use a tone and level of language appropriate for a position paper for an economics class
- Organize your ideas in a logical and coherent manner
- Indicate any words taken directly from the text by using quotation marks or referring to the author
- Follow the conventions of standard written English

The Consumer Culture

Steve Brigance joined the throngs of shoppers at the vast Potomac Mills mall in Woodbridge, Va., for one reason: to pick up a pair of shoes for his wife. His mission accomplished, he pushes his young son and daughter in their stroller from store window to store window, checking out the season's offerings. But he's done his shopping for the day....

And Potomac Mills — with its 230 stores and 1.7 million square feet of space — is the place to go. Indeed, Brigance says, malls like the mammoth emporium literally feed our nation's obsession with acquiring things....

But while the unbridled consumerism symbolized by Potomac Mills worries Brigance, other shoppers at the bustling mall are untroubled by Americans' embrace of shopping as recreation.

"I don't see anything wrong with it," says Rebecca Michalski, a sixth-grade teacher from Fairfax, Va. "I come to Potomac Mills sometimes with my family, and we find that it's a good way to spend time together." Moreover, she dismisses the criticism of people like herself who enjoy shopping. "Look, people spend their time the way they want to," she says, "and that's no one else's business."

That may be true, says Michael Jacobson, executive director of the Center for Science in the Public Interest, a consumer advocacy group. But advertising and marketing have become such strong forces in our society, he says, that consumption for many people has become less a question of personal choice and more a compulsion....

According to Jacobson, [author Mark] Buchanan and other critics of consumerism, the need to buy is literally programmed into us by the media, through advertising and the glorification of material wealth.

"The idea that you can buy fulfillment is repeated constantly in the media, like background noise," says Betsy Taylor, executive director of the Center for a New American Dream, a think tank in Takoma Park, Md., that focuses on "quality of life" issues.

In addition, critics say, consumerism has displaced other, more important yearnings, such as spending time with our families and in our communities. "Even among religious people I see it," Buchanan says. "They rush out of church on Sunday so that they can go to the mall and shop."

But other observers, economists among them, see the criticism of consumerism as misdirected. They argue that consumers are not brainwashed slaves to shopping but intelligent people who know what they want and usually purchase things they genuinely feel that they need....

In the final analysis, [economists Diane] Furchtgott-Roth, [Martin] Regalia and others say, consumer spending drives the economy, creating jobs and bringing material prosperity to many millions of Americans.

"The people who make all of these goods use the money they're paid to do things like buy a house, send their kids to school and build their churches," Regalia says.

Still, the critics contend, society needs to impose some limits on what they see as rampant and harmful consumerism, especially when it's directed at children. Many critics of consumerism even say that television advertising aimed at children should be severely limited at the very least, or banned....

"Kids are very susceptible to advertising, and advertisers know it," says Kathryn C. Montgomery, president of the Center for Media Education, a children's advocacy group.

In addition, Montgomery and others argue, the constant barrage of advertising prods children to frequently ask for things that their parents either can't afford or don't want them to have....

55 But others argue that it is for parents, not government regulators, to decide what their children watch. “Parents have certain standards, and they impose those standards on their kids,” says Jeff Bobeck, a spokesman for the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB).

60 Opponents of putting limits on advertising also argue that commercials do not send children pernicious¹ messages or turn them into bad citizens. Indeed, Bobeck and others point out, most of today’s adults grew up on television and are now productive and law-abiding citizens....

65 Taylor and others argue that the desire to reduce or even replace important needs in our lives with consumption is prompted to a large extent by the media, with their almost relentless barrage of advertisements. Indeed, according to a recent article in *Business Week*, the average American is exposed to 3,000 commercial messages per day, from television and newspaper advertisements to billboards, signs and logos on clothing....

70 “The message is that you are the center of the universe, that you have needs and that you won’t be fulfilled until you buy the right product to fill those needs,” Taylor says....

The problem with this message, Jacobson and others say, is that it’s misleading, because happiness and fulfillment are not the natural byproducts of consumption. “It’s a quick fix, at best, because while you feel better for a little while, it doesn’t last and then you have to go buy something else,” says Taylor.

75 Ironically, Taylor and others say, excessive shopping is not only unsatisfying but highly impractical.

80 “One of the things that consumerism has done is to teach us to value things too little,” Buchanan says. “We always want the newest or the best version of a computer or car or whatever even when we really have no need to replace what we have.”

We need to recapture the “sacredness” of things, Buchanan continues, “to appreciate the things we already have and not constantly be lusting after something more.”

85 But others dispute this vision of addicted, unhappy consumers who buy simply to satisfy other needs, arguing that people generally purchase goods and services because they think they need them....

90 For Furchtgott-Roth and others, the beauty of the American consumer economy is that it gives people an array of choices. “On balance, more and better choices make people much happier,” says CATO’s [Stephen] Moore. “The proof is in the pudding,” he adds, referring to the simple economic reality that if Americans didn’t want more choice, the market wouldn’t respond by creating more. “And besides,” he says, “you always have the choice not to buy.”

95 Indeed, Furchtgott-Roth and Moore argue that, contrary to what the critics of consumerism say, people are not entirely in the thrall of advertisers and marketers. “I don’t believe in the idea that the supply is creating the demand,” Moore says, “because a lot of products fail even though they’ve been introduced with sophisticated promotional and advertising campaigns.” For example, he points to failed promotional campaigns for new products, such as the infamously unsuccessful effort to introduce New Coke in the mid-1980’s....

100 Finally, the supporters say, even habitual shoppers who spend most of their time in malls shouldn’t be criticized or looked down upon. “Shopping is a leisure activity for some people,” Furchtgott-Roth says. “If it’s something that they want to do, something they get value from, there’s nothing wrong with it.”

¹pernicious — highly destructive

105 But opponents of consumerism say that rampant buying is inherently wrong
and that society has a responsibility to find ways to discourage it. One way,
according to Robert Frank, professor at Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y., would
be to make it more expensive for people to spend their money, especially on
luxury goods. “We need to tax savings less and consumption more, to encourage
people to spend less and save more,” Frank says....

110 But CATO’s Moore warns the critics to be careful about what they wish for.
“Our whole economy is based on consumers buying things,” he says, “and if we
stopped buying as much as we now do, the whole economy would naturally slow
down” and the results would be devastating. “For starters, many people would
lose their jobs.”

115 A cutback on consuming would cause other, equally devastating results,
Moore and others say. “Consumerism tends to speed the pace of innovation,” says
Debbie van Opstal, senior vice president at the Council on Competitiveness, a
nonprofit membership group that seeks to increase public awareness of the value
of economic competition. According to van Opstal, highly selective consumers
impel companies to constantly work at building better mousetraps for less.
120 “There’s nothing that forces companies to do things better, cheaper and faster
than demanding customers,” she says....

— David Masci
excerpted from “The Consumer Culture”
CQ Researcher, November 19, 1999

TIME LINE

1900–Present

The rise of radio and TV, then the Internet, spurs consumerism.

1900

Businesses are spending \$500 million annually on advertising.

1920

First radio station broadcasts in Pittsburgh.

1948

Commercial television begins broadcasts to larger audiences.

1950

Diners Club issues the first credit card.

1955

First shopping malls appear.

1960

Some 90 percent of American homes have a television.

1978

Federal Trade Commission attempts, unsuccessfully, to ban TV advertising aimed at children.

1990

Average credit card debt for U.S. household is \$2,250 (adjusted for inflation).

1991

FCC [Federal Communications Commission] sets some limits on children's advertising on television.

1996

Consumer debt grows 20 percent. Average credit card debt per U.S. household reaches \$4,250 (adjusted for inflation).

1998

Individual bankruptcy filings reach a record high.

1999

Average credit card debt for U.S. household is \$4,500 (adjusted for inflation).
Credit card debt exceeds \$500 billion. Internet sales are expected to total \$20 billion.

2004

Sales of products on-line are expected to reach \$185 billion.

Sources: (excerpted and adapted) "The Consumer Culture"
CQ Researcher, November 19, 1999 and
Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland
Economic Trends, May 2000

Multiple-Choice Questions

Directions (7–16): 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 ideas and information you might want to use in your writing. You may return to these questions anytime you wish.

- 7 Consumer critic Michael Jacobson believes that shopping has become
- (1) a primary goal
 - (2) a harmless pastime
 - (3) an extension of work
 - (4) an Internet activity
- 8 According to lines 29 and 30, our consumer culture has the effect of
- (1) hampering financial planning
 - (2) replacing family activities
 - (3) inspiring worthless products
 - (4) causing traffic congestion
- 9 “Critics of consumerism” believe there should be limits placed on
- (1) spending in malls
 - (2) prices for entertainment
 - (3) repackaging of products
 - (4) marketing to children
- 10 An example of the “barrage of advertisements” (line 63) includes endorsements on
- (1) furniture
 - (2) food
 - (3) clothing
 - (4) appliances
- 11 According to Stephen Moore (lines 109 through 113), slowing consumerism would result in
- (1) increased inflation
 - (2) rising unemployment
 - (3) new taxes
 - (4) more innovation
- 12 According to Debbie van Opstal (lines 115 through 121), as consumers become more selective, industry is pushed to
- (1) generate new products
 - (2) promote workers faster
 - (3) offer fewer choices
 - (4) build customer loyalty
- 13 The time line indicates that the first attempt to respond to the harmful effects of television commercials took place in
- (1) 1948
 - (2) 1960
 - (3) 1978
 - (4) 1991
- 14 According to the time line, the most recent contributor to consumerism is the
- (1) credit card
 - (2) Internet
 - (3) television
 - (4) shopping mall
- 15 The time line implies that consumerism is a product of
- (1) advertising use
 - (2) government control
 - (3) population growth
 - (4) increased wealth
- 16 A valid conclusion that can be drawn from the time line is that since 1950 consumers have increased their
- (1) purchases of expensive goods
 - (2) number of credit cards
 - (3) money in savings
 - (4) buying on credit

After you have finished these questions, turn to page 5. Review **The Situation** and read **Your Task** and the **Guidelines**. Use scrap paper to plan your response. Then write your response to Part B, beginning on page 7 of your essay booklet.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION IN ENGLISH

SESSION ONE

Wednesday, August 16, 2006 — 8:30 to 11:30 a.m., only

ANSWER SHEET

Session One – Essay A _____
Essay B _____

Session Two – Essay A _____
Essay B _____

Total Essay Score

Session One –
A–Multiple Choice _____
B–Multiple Choice _____

Session Two –
A–Multiple Choice _____

Total Multiple Choice

Final Score

Tear Here

Student Sex: Male Female

School Grade Teacher

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

Part A

Part B

1 _____

7 _____

2 _____

8 _____

3 _____

9 _____

4 _____

10 _____

5 _____

11 _____

6 _____

12 _____

13 _____

14 _____

15 _____

16 _____

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