

The University of the State of New York

REGENTS HIGH SCHOOL EXAMINATION

## COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

IN

## ENGLISH

## SESSION TWO

**Thursday**, August 17, 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 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.

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

**Directions:** Read the passages on the following pages (a short story 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 world as revealed in the passages. In your essay, use ideas from **both** passages to establish a controlling idea about the natural world. 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 world
- 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

It was evening in late March. The sun was nearing its setting, its soft rays gilding<sup>1</sup> the western limestone headland of Rathlin Island and washing its green hills with wet gold light. A small boy walked jauntily along a hoof-printed path that wriggled between the folds of these hills and opened out into a crater-like valley on the cliff-top. Presently he stopped as if remembering something, then suddenly he left the path, and began running up one of the hills. When he reached the top he was out of breath and stood watching fan-shaped streaks of light radiating from golden-edged clouds, the scene reminding him of a picture he had seen of the Transfiguration.<sup>2</sup> A short distance below him was the cow munching at the edge of a reedy lake. Colm ran down to meet her waving his stick in the air, and the wind rumbling in his ears made him give an exultant whoop which splashed upon the hills in a shower of echoed sound. A flock of gulls lying on the short green grass near the lake rose up languidly, drifting lazily like blown snowflakes over the rim of the cliff.

The lake faced west and was fed by a stream, the drainings of the semicircling hills. One side was open to the winds from the sea, and in winter a little outlet trickled over the cliffs making a black vein in their grey sides. The boy lifted stones and began throwing them into the lake, weaving web after web on its calm surface. Then he skimmed the water with flat stones, some of them jumping the surface and coming to rest on the other side. He was delighted with himself, and after listening to his echoing shouts of delight he ran to fetch his cow. Gently he tapped her on the side and reluctantly she went towards the brown-mudded path that led out of the valley. The boy was about to throw a final stone into the lake when a bird flew low over his head, its neck astrain, and its orange-coloured legs clear in the saffron<sup>3</sup> light. It was a wild duck. It circled the lake twice, thrice, coming lower each time and then with a nervous flapping of wings it skidded along the surface, its legs breaking the water into a series of glittering arcs. Its wings closed, it lit silently, gave a slight shiver, and began pecking indifferently at the water. The boy with dilated eyes watched it eagerly as he turned back and moved slowly along the edge of the lake. The duck was going to the farther end where bulrushes, wild irises and sedge<sup>4</sup> grew around sods of islands and bearded tussocks. Colm stood to watch the bird meandering between tall bulrushes, its body, black and solid as stone against the greying water. Then as if it had sunk it was gone. The boy ran stealthily along the bank looking away from the lake, pretending indifference to the wild duck's movements. When he came opposite to where he had last seen the bird he stopped and peered closely through the gently-sighing reeds whose shadows streaked the water in a maze of black strokes. In front of him was a soddy islet guarded by the spears of sedge and separated from the bank by a narrow channel of water. The water wasn't too deep—he could wade across with care.

Rolling up his short trousers he began to wade, his arms outstretched, and his legs brown and stunted in the mountain water. As he drew near the islet, his feet sank in the mud and bubbles winked up at him. He went more carefully and nervously, peeping through the avenues of reeds and watching each tussock closely. Then one trouser fell, and dipped into the water; the boy dropped his hands to roll it up, he unbalanced, made a splashing sound, and the bird arose

<sup>1</sup>gilding — covering with gold

<sup>2</sup>Transfiguration — a famous religious painting

<sup>3</sup>saffron — yellow

<sup>4</sup>sedge — a marsh plant

with a squawk and whirred away over the cliffs. Colm clambered on to the wet-soaked sod of land, which was spattered with seagulls' feathers and bits of wind-blown rushes. Into each hummock<sup>5</sup> he looked, pulling back the long grass, running hither and thither as if engaged in some queer game. At last he came on the nest facing seawards. Two flat rocks dimpled the face of the water and between them was a neck of land matted with coarse grass containing the nest. It was untidily built of dried rushes, straw and feathers, and in it lay one solitary egg. Colm was delighted. He looked around and saw no one. The nest was his. He lifted the egg, smooth and green as the sky, with a faint tinge of yellow like the reflected light from a buttercup; and then he felt he had done wrong. He left it back quickly. He knew he shouldn't have touched it and he wondered would the bird forsake it. A vague sadness stole over him and he felt in his heart he had sinned. Carefully smoothing out his footprints he hurriedly left the islet and ran after his cow. The sun had now set and the cold shiver of evening enveloped him, chilling his body and saddening his mind.

In the morning he was up and away to school. He took the grass rut that edged the road, for it was softer on the bare feet. His house was the last on the western headland, and after a mile or so he was joined by Peadar Ruadh; both boys, dressed in similar hand-knitted blue jerseys and grey trousers, carried home-made school bags. Colm was full of the nest and as soon as he joined his companion he said eagerly: "Peadar, I've a nest—a wild duck's with one egg."

"And how do you know it's a wild duck's?" asked Peadar, slightly jealous.

"Sure I saw her with my own two eyes, her brown speckled back with a crow's patch on it, and her little yellow legs and——"

"Where is it?" interrupted Peadar in a challenging tone.

"I'm not going to tell you, for you'd rob it," retorted Colm sensing unfriendliness.

"Aach! I suppose it's a tame duck's you have or maybe an old gull's," replied Peadar with sarcasm.

Colm made a puss at his companion. "A lot you know!" he said, "for a gull's egg has spots and this one is greenish-white, for I had it in my hand."

And then the words he didn't want to hear rushed from Peadar in a mocking chant: "You had it in your hand! She'll forsake it! She'll forsake! She'll forsake!"

Colm felt as if he would choke or cry with vexation.<sup>6</sup> His mind told him that Peadar was right, but somehow he couldn't give into it and he replied: "She'll not forsake! She'll not! I know she'll not!"

But in school his faith wavered. Through the windows he could see moving sheets of rain—rain that dribbled down the panes filling his mind with thoughts of the lake creased and chilled by the wind; the nest sodden and black with wetness; and the egg cold as a cave stone. He shivered from the thoughts and fidgeted with the ink-well cover, sliding it backwards and forwards mechanically. The mischievous look had gone from his eyes and the school-day dragged on interminably.<sup>7</sup> But at last they were out in the rain, Colm rushing home as fast as he could.

He spent little time at his dinner of potatoes and salted fish and played none with his baby brothers and sisters, but hurried out to the valley, now smoky with drifts of slanting rain, its soaked grass yielding to the bare feet. Before long he was at the lake-side where the rain lisped ceaselessly in the water and wavelets licked the seeping sides leaving an irregular line of froth like frost on a grey slate.

<sup>5</sup>hummock — small hill

<sup>6</sup>vexation — annoyance

<sup>7</sup>interminably — endlessly

Opposite the islet the boy entered the water. The wind was blowing into his face  
rustling noisily the rushes, heavy with the dust of rain. A moss-cheeper, swaying  
on a reed like a mouse, filled the air with light cries of loneliness. The boy reached  
the islet, his heart thumping with excitement, wondering did the bird forsake. He  
100 went slowly, quietly, on to the strip of land that led to the nest. He rose on his toes,  
looking over the sedge to see if he could see her. And then every muscle tautened.  
She was on, her shoulders hunched up, and her bill lying on her breast as if she  
were asleep. Colm's heart thumped wildly in his ears. She hadn't forsaken. He was  
about to turn stealthily away. Something happened. The bird moved, her neck  
105 straightened, twitching nervously from side to side. The boy's head swam with  
lightness. He stood transfixed. The wild duck, with a panicky flapping, rose  
heavily, squawking as she did so, a piece of straw and a white object momentarily  
entwined in her legs. The egg fell on the flat wet rock beside the nest, besmearing  
it with yellow slime. A sense of tremendous guilt seized Colm, a throbbing silence  
110 enveloped him as if everything had gone from the earth leaving him alone.  
Stupefied, numbed to every physical sense, he floundered across the black water,  
running wildly from the scene of the disaster.

—Michael McLaverty  
“The Wild Duck's Nest”  
from *The Irish Monthly*, April 1934

**Passage II**  
**In Time of Silver Rain**

In time of silver rain  
The earth  
Puts forth new life again,  
Green grasses grow  
5 And flowers lift their heads,  
And over all the plain  
The wonder spreads  
Of life,  
Of life,  
10 Of life!

In time of silver rain  
The butterflies  
Lift silken wings  
To catch a rainbow cry,  
15 And trees put forth  
New leaves to sing  
In joy beneath the sky  
As down the roadway  
Passing boys and girls  
20 Go singing, too,  
In time of silver rain  
When spring  
And life  
Are new.

—Langston Hughes  
from *Selected Poems of Langston Hughes*, 1959  
Alfred A. Knopf

## 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 development of the opening paragraph relies on the use of
  - (1) cause and effect
  - (2) comparison and contrast
  - (3) appeal to the senses
  - (4) accumulation of generalizations
  
- 2 The boy's mood as he walks to get his cow can best be described as
  - (1) carefree
  - (2) confused
  - (3) unhappy
  - (4) cautious
  
- 3 In line 32, the word "meandering" most nearly means
  - (1) pausing
  - (2) wandering
  - (3) falling
  - (4) dancing
  
- 4 Colm's initial delight at finding the wild duck's egg is followed quickly by
  - (1) amusement
  - (2) relief
  - (3) anger
  - (4) guilt
  
- 5 The author uses the dialogue between the two boys to
  - (1) intensify Colm's feeling
  - (2) provide essential information
  - (3) lessen Peadar's hostility
  - (4) inject comic relief

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

- 6 The narrator's use of the word "silver" (line 1) suggests that the rain is
  - (1) warm
  - (2) hard
  - (3) valuable
  - (4) safe
  
- 7 According to the poem, "wonder" (line 7) is inspired by the
  - (1) discovery of truth
  - (2) renewal of nature
  - (3) flight from reality
  - (4) freedom from stress
  
- 8 The narrator describes the actions of both the flowers (line 5) and the leaves (lines 16 and 17) by using
  - (1) alliteration
  - (2) hyperbole
  - (3) metaphor
  - (4) personification
  
- 9 The actions of the "Passing boys and girls" (line 19) suggest
  - (1) celebration
  - (2) discovery
  - (3) escape
  - (4) denial
  
- 10 The overall attitude of the narrator toward nature is one of
  - (1) disappointment
  - (2) appreciation
  - (3) uncertainty
  - (4) curiosity

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:

“To gain that which is worth having, it may be necessary to lose everything else.”

—Bernadette Devlin  
*The Price of My Soul*, 1969

### 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**

Thursday, August 17, 2006 — 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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