

The University of the State of New York

REGENTS HIGH SCHOOL EXAMINATION

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

IN

ENGLISH

SESSION TWO

Wednesday, January 24, 2007 — 1:15 to 4:15 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.

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 poem and an excerpt from a memoir). 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 influence of grandmothers as revealed in the passages. In your essay, use ideas from **both** passages to establish a controlling idea about the influence of grandmothers. 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 influence of grandmothers
- 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

Lineage

My grandmothers were strong.
They followed plows and bent to toil.
They moved through fields sowing seed.
They touched earth and grain grew.
5 They were full of sturdiness and singing.
My grandmothers were strong.

My grandmothers are full of memories
Smelling of soap and onions and wet clay
With veins rolling roughly over quick hands
10 They have many clean words to say.
My grandmothers were strong.
Why am I not as they?

—Margaret Walker
from *For My People*, 1942
Yale University Press

Passage II

...With my grandmother there was a brief ritual phrase in her dialect mouthed by us children when we went to the old Queen Anne style house in Utica where my mother and all her brothers and sisters grew up. My grandmother was always in the kitchen, dressed in black, standing at a large black
5 coal range stirring soup or something. My brothers and I, awkward in the presence of her foreignness, would be pushed in her direction by our mother during those holiday visits, and told "Go say hello to Gramma."

We'd go to the strange old woman who didn't look like any of the grandmothers of our friends or like any of those on the covers of the *Saturday Evening Post* around Thanksgiving time. Gramma didn't stuff a turkey or make candied sweet potatoes and pumpkin pies. She made chicken soup filled with tiny pale meatballs and a bitter green she grew in her backyard along with broad beans and basil, things that were definitely un-American in those days. Her smell was like that of the cedar closet in our attic. She spoke strange words with a raspy
10 sound.
15

When we stepped into her kitchen to greet her she smiled broadly and tweaked our cheeks. We said in a rush the phrase our mother taught us. We didn't know what it meant. I think we never asked. And if we were to know it meant "how are you?" what difference would it have made? What further
20 knowledge would we have had of the old woman in the shapeless black garment, with her wisps of gray hair falling out of the thick knob crammed with large old-fashioned tortoise-shell hairpins? None. We were strangers.

When on a visit upstate I had occasion to drive through Cazenovia, a village on the shores of Lake Cazenovia, it appeared to me as if in a dream. I saw again
25 the lakeshore meadow that has always remained indelibly imprinted on my mind from childhood, but that I had thought must, by now, have vanished from the real world. That meadow, now called Gypsy Bay Park, was the site of family picnics to which we and Aunt Mary's family proceeded from Syracuse, while the other contingent (which was by far the greater number—my mother's three brothers,
30 two other sisters and all their families plus our grandmother) came from Utica. Cazenovia was the approximate half-way point, and there in the meadow on the lake the cars would all pull up and baskets of food would be unloaded for the great summer reunion....

It was Gramma who had decreed this annual outing. When two of her
35 daughters married and moved from Utica, she had made known her wish: that the family should meet each summer when travel was easier and eat together *al fresco*.¹ It was her pleasure to have all her children, and their children, convene in the meadow, and spend the day eating, singing, playing cards, gossiping, throwing ball, making jokes and toasts. It was a celebration of her progeny² of
40 which she, long widowed, was the visible head, the venerable ancestor, the symbol of the strong-willed adventurer who had come from the old world to make a new life and to prosper.

She was monumental. I can see her still, an imposing figure, still dressed in black although it was summer, seated on a folding camp chair (just for her) under
45 the shade of a large, leafy elm tree. She sat there as silently as a Sioux chief and was served food, given babies to kiss, and paid homage to all day. The others

¹al fresco — in the open air

²progeny — offspring

spread around her, sitting on blankets on the grass, or on the running boards of their Oldsmobiles and Buicks. What made my grandmother so intriguing was the mystery of her. For, despite its gaiety, the family picnic was also a time of puzzlement for me. Who was this stranger in black with whom I could not speak? What was her story? What did she know?

What I knew of my grandmother, I heard from my mother: she believed in good food on the table and good linen on the bed. Everything else was fripperies³ and she had the greatest scorn for those who dieted or got their nourishment through pills and potions. She knew you are what you eat and she loved America for the great range of foods that it provided to people like her, used to so little, used to making do. She could not tolerate stinginess; she lived with her eldest son and his family of eleven and did all the gardening and cooking, providing a generous table....

We were about fifty kin gathered in that meadow, living proof of the family progress. Gramma's sons and daughters vied to offer her their services, goods, and offspring—all that food, those cars, the well-dressed young men who would go to college. And Butch, an older cousin, would take me by the hand to the water's edge and I'd be allowed to wade in Cazenovia's waters, which were always tingling cold and made me squeal with delicious shock.

And yet with all that, for all the good times and good food and the happy chattering people who fussed over me and my brothers, I still felt a sense of strangeness, a sense of my parents' tolerating with an edge of disdain this old world *festa* only for the sake of the old lady. When I asked my mother why Gramma looked so strange and never spoke to us, I was told, she came from the old country ... she doesn't speak our language. She might as well have been from Mars.

I never remember hearing our own mother speak to her mother, although she must have, however briefly. I only recall my astonishment at mother's grief when Gramma died and we went to Utica for the funeral. How could mother really feel so bad about someone she had never really talked to? Was it just because she was expected to cry? Or was she crying for the silence that had lain like a chasm between them?...

³fripperies — nonessentials

—Helen Barolini
excerpted from “How I Learned to Speak Italian”
Southwest Review, Winter 1997

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.

- 1 The narrator implies that the strength of grandmothers results from their
 - (1) cheery songs
 - (2) long lives
 - (3) large bodies
 - (4) hard work

- 2 “They touched earth and grain grew” (line 4) suggests the grandmothers’ role of
 - (1) protector
 - (2) provider
 - (3) teacher
 - (4) entertainer

- 3 In order to emphasize her feelings about her grandmothers, the narrator uses
 - (1) repetition
 - (2) onomatopoeia
 - (3) simile
 - (4) symbolism

- 4 The narrator’s feeling toward her grandmothers is best described as
 - (1) resentment
 - (2) embarrassment
 - (3) admiration
 - (4) concern

- 5 In comparison to the grandmothers, the narrator is seen as
 - (1) more nurturing
 - (2) more religious
 - (3) less intelligent
 - (4) less capable

Passage II (the excerpt from a memoir) — Questions 6–8 refer to Passage II.

- 6 According to the narrator, the “annual outing” celebrated the importance of
 - (1) solitude
 - (2) responsibility
 - (3) family
 - (4) travel

- 7 The comparison between the Native American chief and the grandmother (line 45) characterizes her as
 - (1) courageous
 - (2) respected
 - (3) intelligent
 - (4) kind

- 8 The narrator’s description of her mother’s reaction to the death of “Gramma” is an example of
 - (1) irony
 - (2) personification
 - (3) alliteration
 - (4) humor

Questions 9 and 10 refer to both passages.

- 9 Both passages reveal the theme of
 - (1) grandparents’ trust
 - (2) generational difference
 - (3) social conflict
 - (4) family rivalry

- 10 The grandmothers of Passage I differ from the grandmother in Passage II in the ability to
 - (1) discipline
 - (2) heal
 - (3) survive
 - (4) communicate

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 7 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:

“The human heart has ever dreamed of a fairer world than
the one it knows.”
—Carleton Noyes
“Poetry: General Introduction”
from *Lectures on the Harvard Classics*, 1914

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

**COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION IN ENGLISH
SESSION TWO**

Wednesday, January 24, 2007 — 1:15 to 4:15 p.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

COMPREHENSIVE ENGLISH SESSION TWO

Tear Here

Tear Here