

DIRECTIONS FOR TEACHERS

LISTENING SECTION

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION IN ENGLISH

Thursday, June 14, 2007—9:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m., only

BE SURE THAT THE LISTENING SECTION IS ADMINISTERED TO EVERY STUDENT.

- 1 Before the start of the examination period, say:

Do not open the examination booklet until you are instructed to do so.

- 2 Distribute one examination booklet and one essay booklet to each student.

- 3 After each student has received an examination booklet and an essay booklet, say:

Tear off the answer sheet, which is the last page of the examination booklet, and fill in its heading. Now circle “Session One” and fill in the heading on each page of your essay booklet.

- 4 After the students have filled in all headings on their answer sheets and essay booklets, say:

Look at page 2 of your examination booklet and follow along while I read the **Overview** and **The Situation**.

Overview:

For this part of the test, you will listen to an account about the power of books, 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:

To open the local library’s book fair, you have been asked to give a speech about the power of books. In preparation for writing your speech, listen to an account by author Gary Paulsen. Then use relevant information from the account to write your speech.

Now I will read the passage aloud to you for the first time.

- 5 Now read the passage aloud, including the attribution at the end. Read with appropriate expression, but without added comment.

Listening Passage

Books saved my life.

First reading them, then writing them.

As surely as my lead dog Cookie pulled me from the bottom of a lake after I fell through the ice, books are the reason I survived my miserable childhood. As certainly as my sloop Scallywag has safely taken me through storms and huge seas, books have sustained me as an adult.

The awfulness of my childhood has been well covered. But I remember two women who took the time to help me when I was a boy and both women, not so coincidentally, helped me with books.

Because I lived from the age of seven to when I was nearly ten in the Philippine Islands and had a private military tutor, I had never been to a public school.

We came back to the States when I was just short of ten and moved to Washington, D.C., so my father, who was in the army, could work at the Pentagon. My mother promptly enrolled me in public school, took me there the first morning, handed me over to a teacher, and left.

I was painfully shy, terrified at the mob of kids and could not go into the room. It was an old school and at the back of the classroom, there was a cloakroom, a shallow closet the width of the room but closed in except for one door. I went in the closet and took my coat off with the rest of the children but then I could not leave, simply could not make my legs move to walk out into the classroom. I was too frightened.

There were many things the teacher could have done wrong. She could have forced me out, dragged me into the classroom, could have made me leave. Instead she did everything right.

She looked into the closet, saw me sitting back in the corner and disappeared for a moment and said something to the children. Then she came back into the closet and sat down next to me in the corner and put her arm around me.

She had a book, a picture book. I cannot recall the contents of the book except that it had a horse's head on the cover and she sat next to me quietly for a time and read to me softly and let me turn the pages. I was lost in the quiet of the cloakroom, lost in the book so deeply that everything else fell away.

After a time, it could have been ten minutes or an hour or my whole life, she asked me if I thought I could come out into the room and take my seat at a desk. I nodded and she stood and took my hand and led me into the classroom.

A few years later, when I was thirteen, another woman, a librarian, gave me another book and I consider every good thing that has ever happened to me since then a result of that woman handing me that book.

I'd been wandering the streets of the small Minnesota town we lived in one bitter winter evening, waiting for the drunks in the bars to get juiced. I sold newspapers, trying to scrape together a little money so that I could buy better clothes, believing, as kids do, that the right clothes might somehow lift me from my wretchedly unpopular social life. And if I waited for the men who hung around in the bars to get a few drinks in them, I could hustle them for extra change.

I stopped in the library to warm up. The librarian noticed me, called me over, and asked if I wanted a library card. Then she handed me a card with my name on it and gave me a book.

Later that night back at home, or what passed for home—a crummy apartment in the bad part of town—I took the book, a box of crackers, and a jar of grape jelly down to the basement, to a hideaway I'd created behind the furnace where someone had abandoned a creaky old armchair under a bare lightbulb.

I sat in the corner, eating jelly-smeared crackers, plodding through the book. It took me

forever to read. I was such a poor reader that, by the time I'd finished a page, I'd have forgotten what I'd read on the page before and I'd have to go back. That first book must have taken me over a month to finish, hunched over the pages late at night.

I wish I could remember the name of that first book—I can't even remember what it was about. What I do remember about that evening at the library was that it marked the first of many nights the librarian would give me a book. "Here," she'd say, handing me a few battered volumes, "I think you'll like these." She would hand select books that she thought would interest me—Westerns, mysteries, survival tales, science fiction, Edgar Rice Burroughs. I would take them home to hide in the basement and read; I'd bring them back and we'd talk about them, and she'd give me more books.

But she wasn't just giving me books, she was giving me ... everything. She gave me the first hint I'd ever had in my entire life that there was something other than my drunken parents screaming at each other in the kitchen. She handed me a world where I wasn't going to get beaten up by the school bullies. She showed me places where it didn't hurt all the time.

I read terribly at first but as I did more of it, the books became more a part of me and within a short time they gave me a life, a look at life outside myself that made me look forward instead of backward.

Years later, after I'd graduated from high school, joined the army, gotten married, had children, and made a career as an electronics engineer working in satellite tracking, books once again changed the course of my life. This time, though, I wrote them.

I was sitting in a satellite tracking station at about nine o'clock at night when suddenly I knew that I had to be a writer. In that instant, I gave up or lost everything that had made up my life until that point—my work, my family, certainly my earning potential.

Writing had suddenly become everything ... everything ... to me.

I stood up from the console, handed in my security badge, and headed for Hollywood. I had to go to a place where I knew writers were; I had to be near them, had to learn from them. I got a job as a proofreader of a men's magazine, going from earning \$500 a week to \$400 a month, and apprenticed myself to a couple of editors.

These two men gave me writing assignments, and in order to continue receiving their help, I had to write an article, a chapter of a book, or a short story every night, every single night, no exceptions, no excuses, for them to critique. If I missed a single day, they would no longer help me.

I have been writing for over thirty years, spent most of it starving, trying to make it work for me, in my mind; trying to make words come together in the right patterns, movements, what some have called the loops and whorls of the story dance, and it has always been hard. It is, sometimes, still difficult. But I love writing more now, I think, than I ever have. The way the stories dance, the rhythms and movements of them, is grandly exciting to me. ...

— excerpted from *Shelf Life: Stories by the Book*, 2003
Simon and Schuster Books for Young Readers

6 After reading the passage aloud once, say:

You may take a few minutes to look over **The Situation** and your notes.
(Pause) Now I will read the passage aloud a second time.

7 Read the passage a second time.

8 After the second reading, say:

Now turn to page 4 of your examination booklet, read the directions, and answer the multiple-choice questions. Be sure to follow all the directions given in your examination booklet and your essay booklet. You may now begin.