

DIRECTIONS FOR TEACHERS

LISTENING SECTION

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION IN ENGLISH

Wednesday, August 13, 2008 — 8:30 to 11:30 a.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 electric guitar, 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 social studies class is studying 20th-century American inventions. For your project, you have decided to write a report about the invention of the electric guitar and how it has helped to shape contemporary music. In preparation for writing your report, listen to an account by historian Monica M. Smith about the invention of the electric guitar. Then use relevant information from the account to write your report.

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

Some things were invented for obvious reasons. With others, the motivation is less clear. Consider, for example, the electric guitar. When guitarists first crudely electrified their instruments in the 1920s, what were they trying to do? Why change something that had been successful for hundreds of years? Could they have envisioned that the instrument that inspired some of [classical composers] Vivaldi's and Boccherini's most beautiful compositions would one day be used by Motörhead and blink-182?

In fact, the driving force behind the invention of the electric guitar was simply the search for a louder sound, a desire that had existed long before the development of electronic amplifiers and speakers in the 1920s. As musical performances moved to increasingly large public spaces over the course of the nineteenth century, the sizes of ensembles grew correspondingly, and musicians needed more volume. For this and other reasons, Americans had been making innovations in guitar design since before the Civil War...

The quest for volume intensified during the 1920s with the advent of big-band music and commercial radio and the rise of the recording industry. By the end of the decade the big-band era was in full swing, but the guitar was stuck in the rhythm section and couldn't be heard in crowded, noisy clubs, bars, and dancehalls. Since recordings were made directly to phonograph disks, using either an acoustical recording horn or a single electric microphone for the whole band, there was no way to boost the guitar's sound in the studio either...

By the end of the 1930s electronic amplification was firmly established as the best way to make a guitar louder, despite some misgivings among traditionalists. Detractors complained that it did not produce a pure, "authentic" tone, and in a sense they were right: Bypassing the resonance created by the hollow body meant altering the instrument's traditional timbre. But musicians were championing the electric's louder sound, which enabled the guitar to compete with other instruments in ensemble performances. Instead of trying to duplicate the warmth and lushness of an acoustic guitar, musicians and engineers tinkered with their equipment and ended up creating an entirely new kind of sound...

Yet along with its benefits, the new technology brought problems. Reverberation of the sound through the instrument's hollow body, which was responsible for the guitar's lovely timbre when played acoustically, caused distortion, overtones, and feedback when combined with electromagnetic pickups. But as the electric guitar developed its own sonic qualities and style of play, musicians and manufacturers realized that it should be designed from scratch with amplification in mind. This led a few innovators to think about replacing the hollow body with a solid one...

Because the sonic character of a solid-body electric does not depend on its shape, makers could experiment with a wide range of imaginative designs. The Stratocaster, modernistic and space-age yet still recognizably guitar-shaped, remains a classic of 1950s design. The Gibson Flying V was the firm's first boldly shaped electric guitar. It was introduced in 1958 as part of a modernistic line of guitars, along with the angular, asymmetrical Explorer. These designs proved too extreme for the market and were soon discontinued. In the late 1960s, however, musicians like Albert King and Jimi Hendrix (who was recently named the greatest guitarist of all time by *Rolling Stone* [Magazine]) helped revive the Flying V's popularity, encouraging guitar makers to develop other adventurous shapes.

While the electric guitar was feeding rock 'n' roll's explosive growth, what about the genre of music that had started it all? In jazz the guitar lost its role as a rhythm instrument with the demise of the big bands in the 1950s. As a solo instrument, the electric guitar is

still struggling to free itself from its associations with fusion (jazz for rock fans) and smooth jazz (jazz for office workers). Those genres do have their adherents, of course. And with such virtuosos as George Benson and Pat Metheny, jazz guitar is still alive and doing about as well as anything else in jazz. Yet if there had been no electric guitar, jazz today would sound pretty much the same, whereas rock 'n' roll would not exist at all...

The most powerful demonstration of the electric guitar's role as a sociopolitical symbol came at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival, when Bob Dylan, a tireless innovator in folk and blues idioms and a protest singer of solidly liberal values, plugged in an electric guitar amid boos and catcalls from the audience. On one level, it was a betrayal; the young genius who could have led a new generation of fans to the timeless joys of American folk music was instead (as the folkies saw it) pandering to the tastes of teenyboppers. More than that, however, Dylan's act of plugging in symbolized the merger of the political left with the counterculture. The divergent paths Dylan's music was taking were not what alienated fans; it was the electric guitar. Dylan could get as experimental as he wanted, and everything would have been fine as long as he didn't plug in...

Through the 1970s and 1980s rock guitarists continued experimenting. One genre emphasized raucous power chords, flashy solos, and overall loud volume. It came to be known as "heavy metal." Eddie Van Halen, of the band Van Halen, experimented with stunts like dive-bombing, using the tremolo arm to drive the guitar's lowest note even lower. Hendrix had done this, but he usually forced the guitar out of tune as a result. However, by the mid-1980s the inventor Floyd Rose had improved solid-body guitar tremolo systems, making it possible to dive-bomb repeatedly...

In keeping with its status as a symbol of America, the electric guitar is the most democratic of instruments. It is extremely accessible in terms of both cost and learning curves. A beginner can manage a few chords after a lesson or two, and sometimes that's all you need. And while electric-guitar players are still overwhelmingly male, women are increasingly making their mark. Once the very act of playing an electric guitar seemed inherently aggressive and masculine, but since the 1970s female guitarists like Bonnie Raitt and Joan Jett have become prominent. Raitt got her start playing blues, and her musical style continues to evolve, combining elements of blues, pop, and rock. Jett and her band the Blackhearts made a splash in the 1980s with their harder edge. Jett's influence on the music scene earned her a place on *Rolling Stone's* top 100 list, one of only two women included (the other was Joni Mitchell).

The electric guitar is a prime example of the law of unintended consequences. At first it just wanted to be heard, but it ended up taking over popular music and revolutionizing society along the way. Amplified musical technology is now at the forefront, and since most of the music we hear is electrified and synthesized, performing "unplugged" has become the exception rather than the rule. Today, more than seven decades after bursting onto the scene, the electric guitar is played and enjoyed worldwide and has achieved iconic status as a symbol of American culture.

—excerpted from "The Electric Guitar,"
American Heritage of Invention and Technology, Summer 2004

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.