

The University of the State of New York

REGENTS HIGH SCHOOL EXAMINATION

**COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION**

IN

**ENGLISH****SESSION ONE****Tuesday, January 27, 2009 — 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 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 food choices, 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 health class is preparing a newsletter on nutrition to distribute to high school students. For your contribution to the newsletter, you have decided to write an article about how people make food choices. In preparation for writing your article, listen to an account by dietitian Cynthia Sass about food choices. Then use relevant information from the account to write your article.

**Your Task:** Write an article for a newsletter on nutrition for high school students in which you describe how people make food choices.

### Guidelines:

#### Be sure to

- Tell your audience what they need to know about how people make food choices
- Use specific, accurate, and relevant information from the account to support your description
- Use a tone and level of language appropriate for an article for a newsletter on nutrition for high school students
- 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.**

## Multiple-Choice Questions

**Directions** (1–6): Use your notes to answer the following questions about the passage read to you. Select the best suggested answer and write its number in the space provided on the answer sheet. The questions may help you think about ideas and information you might use in your writing. You may return to these questions anytime you wish.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>1 Cynthia Sass's influence on her husband's food choices shows that adult decisions about what to eat can</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(1) be controlled by genetics</li><li>(2) weaken their immune systems</li><li>(3) be significantly changed</li><li>(4) contribute to vitamin deficiency</li></ul> <p>2 According to the account, food tastes are recognized by which part of the body?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(1) the throat</li><li>(2) the teeth</li><li>(3) the lips</li><li>(4) the brain</li></ul> <p>3 People around the world tend to prefer food that tastes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(1) sour</li><li>(2) sweet</li><li>(3) salty</li><li>(4) savory</li></ul> | <p>4 According to the account, bitterness could identify a food as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(1) unsafe to eat</li><li>(2) low in cholesterol</li><li>(3) rich in fiber</li><li>(4) easy to prepare</li></ul> <p>5 According to the account, the test with paper strips proves that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(1) paper tastes sweet</li><li>(2) receptors inhibit digestion</li><li>(3) the tongue reacts to pressure</li><li>(4) taste bud preferences differ widely</li></ul> <p>6 Unpleasant food tastes can be modified by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(1) drinking plenty of water</li><li>(2) eating a varied diet</li><li>(3) enhancing food's natural sweetness</li><li>(4) brushing teeth after meals</li></ul> |
|--|---|

After you have finished these questions, turn to page 2. Review **The Situation** and read **Your Task** and the **Guidelines**. Use scrap paper to plan your response. Then write your response in Part A, beginning on page 1 of your essay booklet. After you finish your response for Part A, go to page 5 of your examination booklet and complete Part B.

## Part B

**Directions:** Read the text and study the table 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:** A local agency is investigating alternative building materials. As a person who is interested in ecology, you have decided to write a letter to the director of the agency persuading the agency to consider straw bales as a future construction material.

**Your Task:** Using relevant information from *both* documents, write a letter to the director of the local agency in which you persuade the agency to consider straw bales as a future construction material. **Write only the body of the letter.**

### Guidelines:

#### Be sure to

- Tell your audience what they need to know to persuade them to consider straw bales as a future construction material
- Use specific, accurate, and relevant information from the text *and* the table to support your argument
- Use a tone and level of language appropriate for a letter to the director of a local agency
- 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

## Text

...Straw-bale building is a practical and perhaps under utilized construction method. Initiated in the United States at the turn of the century [1900], straw-bale building is showing new merit in today's marketplace. Walls of straw, easily constructed and structurally sound, promise to take some of the pressure off of limited forest resources....

### History of Straw Bale Construction

People have built homes using straw, grass, or reed throughout history. These materials were used because they were reliable and easy to obtain. European houses built of straw or reed are now over two hundred years old. In the United States, too, people turned to straw houses, particularly after the hay/straw baler entered common usage in the 1890s. Homesteaders in the northwestern Nebraska "Sandhills" area, for example, turned to baled-hay construction, in response to a shortage of trees for lumber. Bale construction was used for homes, farm buildings, churches, schools, offices, and grocery stores....

In Wyoming, straw-bale structures have consistently withstood severe weather and earthquakes. "The earthquake was in the 1970s and it was either 5.3 or 5.8,"<sup>1</sup> Chuck Bruner, a resident of one of the houses told *The Mother Earth News*. "There wasn't a single crack in the house. You can live in this house comfortably during the summer. It stays nice and cool. We have never needed any air conditioning, and in summer we get days up in the 90s. Also, last winter, I only turned our small bedroom heater on twice. If I had to guess how our utility bills compare to those of our neighbors, I'd have to say our bill is about half."

### Straw: A Renewable Resource

Straw, the stalks remaining after the harvest of grain, is a renewable resource, grown annually. Each year, 200 million tons of straw are under utilized or just wasted in this country alone. Wheat, oats, barley, rice, rye, and flax are all desirable straws for bale walls. Even though the early bale homes used hay for the bales, hay is not recommended because it is leafy and easily eaten by creatures great and small. Straw, tough and fibrous, lasts far longer. Straw-bale expert Matts Myhrman estimates that straw from the harvest of the United States' major grains could be used to construct five million, 2,000 square-foot houses every year! More conservative figures from the U.S. Department of Agriculture indicate that America's farmers annually harvest enough straw to build about four million, 2,000 square-foot homes each year, nearly four times the houses currently constructed.

Building a straw-bale house is relatively simple. A basic 2,000 square-foot house requires about 300 standard three-wire bales of straw (costing approximately \$1,000). Placed on a foundation, the bales are skewered on rebar pins<sup>2</sup> like giant shiskabobs.<sup>3</sup> After wiring and plumbing, the walls are sealed and finished. Because grains are grown in almost every region of the country, straw bales are readily available, with minimal transportation costs. Lumber from trees, in addition to becoming more scarce and expensive, must be transported over longer distances.

### Types of Straw Bales

Straw bales come in all shapes and sizes, from small two-string bales to larger three-string bales and massive cubical or round bales. The medium sized rectangular three-string bales are preferred for building construction. Three-

<sup>1</sup>5.3 or 5.8 — earthquake strength as measured by the Richter scale

<sup>2</sup>rebar pins — bars used for reinforcement

<sup>3</sup>shiskabobs — a meal consisting of seasoned meat pieces roasted on long metal or wooden pins

45 string bales are better structurally, have higher R-value,<sup>4</sup> and are often more  
compact. A typical medium-sized, three-wire bale may be 23" × 16" × 42" and  
may weigh from 75 to 85 pounds. The smaller two-wire bales, which are easier  
to handle, are roughly 18" × 14" × 36" and weigh 50 to 60 pounds. If the current  
trend continues, it may not be long before “construction-grade” bales begin to  
50 appear....

### **How Affordable Is a Straw-Bale House?**

The cost of a straw-bale house depends on the size of the building, the cost  
of materials including bales, the design of the house, and the amount of “sweat-  
equity” donated by the owner and friends. Straw-bale costs range from fifty cents  
each when purchased from the fields of Montana to \$3.50 to \$5.00 for three-wire  
55 bales delivered to a site in Arizona. Homes have been built for as little as \$5,000  
to well above \$200,000. Construction costs range from \$5 to \$120 per square-  
foot. (\$53 per square-foot is the national average for conventional construction.)  
Straw-bale houses come in a variety of shapes and sizes from A-frames to tipis to  
two-story custom homes. Simple, owner-built structures tend to be less  
60 expensive.

Long-lasting, low maintenance building materials and protection from the  
elements are key for a long-term, maintenance-free house. Providing proper site  
drainage is the most important factor for the home’s longevity.<sup>5</sup> If the ground  
around the house remains dry and the house is sufficiently maintained, the life-  
65 span could be hundreds of years. The roof is another crucial component. Leaky  
roofs damage many homes each year. Steeper roofs constructed of more  
permanent roofing materials are preferred. Properly built and maintained, straw-  
bale walls can last hundreds of years....

### **Frequently Asked Questions About Straw-Bale**

This section answers some of the most commonly asked questions about  
70 straw-bale construction.

Will the bales rot? Without adequate safeguards, rot can occur. The most  
important safeguard is to buy dry bales. Fungi and mites can live in wet straw, so  
it’s best to buy the straw when it’s dry and keep it dry until it is safely sealed into  
the walls. Paint for interior and exterior wall surfaces should be permeable to  
75 water vapor so that moisture doesn’t get trapped inside the wall. Construction  
design must prevent water from gathering where the first course of bales meets  
the foundation. Even if straw bales are plastered, the foundation upon which the  
bales rest should be elevated above outside ground level by at least six inches or  
more. This protects bales from rain water splashing off the roof.

80 Will pests destroy the walls? Straw bales provide fewer havens for pests such  
as insects and vermin than conventional wood framing. Once plastered, any  
chance of access is eliminated.

Are straw-bale buildings a fire hazard? The National Research Council of  
Canada tested plastered straw bales for fire safety and found them to perform  
85 better than conventional building materials. In fact, the plaster surface withstood  
temperatures of about 1,850° F for two hours before any cracks developed.  
According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, “The straw-  
bales/mortar structure wall has proven to be exceptionally resistant to fire. The  
straw bales hold enough air to provide good insulation value, but because they are  
90 compacted firmly, they don’t hold enough air to permit combustion.”...

<sup>4</sup>R-value — insulation rating

<sup>5</sup>longevity — long life

— U.S. Department of Energy  
excerpted from “House of Straw —  
Straw Bale Construction Comes of Age,” April 1995

**TABLE**

**Life-Cycle Costs\* of a House — 30 Years**

*Estimated costs and savings for a 1,375 square-foot, 3-bedroom, 2-bath home in a moderate climate with both heating and cooling demands*

<b>Costs</b>	<b>Conventional House Built by Contractor</b>	<b>Straw-Bale House Built by Contractor</b>	<b>Straw-Bale House Built by Owner and Contractor</b>	<b>Straw-Bale House Built by Owner</b>
Construction	\$ 82,500	\$ 82,500	\$ 40,000	\$ 20,625
Down Payment (20% of construction costs)	\$ 16,500	\$ 16,500	\$ 8,000	none
Mortgage (over 30 years)	\$ 118,800	\$ 118,800	\$ 57,600	none
Energy (heating/cooling)	\$ 36,000	\$ 18,000	\$ 9,000	\$ 9,000
<b>Total Life-Cycle Costs</b>	<b>\$ 171,300</b>	<b>\$ 153,300</b>	<b>\$ 74,600</b>	<b>\$ 29,625</b>

\* life-cycle costs — cost of finance (down payment and mortgage), utilities, and maintenance over the life of the building

Source: (adapted) Athena Swentzell Steen, Bill Steen, and David Bainbridge with David Eisenberg  
*The Straw Bale House*, 1994  
Chelsea Green Publishing Company



## 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 The text implies that an increased use of straw-bale construction would impact the preservation of
- (1) hardwood trees                      (3) coastal habitats
  - (2) island waterways                  (4) nature preserves
- 8 According to the text, straw-bale structures have withstood which type of natural disaster?
- (1) landslide                              (3) wildfire
  - (2) volcano                                (4) earthquake
- 9 In line 22, straw is referred to as a “renewable resource” to emphasize that straw has the advantage of being easily
- (1) regulated                              (3) replenished
  - (2) repaired                                (4) refined
- 10 According to the text, a major savings in using straw bales for construction is in the
- (1) developing of architectural plans
  - (2) installing of electrical wiring
  - (3) shipping of building materials
  - (4) scaling of plaster walls
- 11 As used in the text, the term “sweat-equity” (lines 52 and 53) refers to
- (1) time invested in loan applications
  - (2) labor needed to build a house
  - (3) deductions necessary for taxes
  - (4) supplies ordered for construction
- 12 According to the text, the life-span of a straw-bale structure can be extended by a
- (1) weather-tight roof
  - (2) solar-panel unit
  - (3) tree-sheltered location
  - (4) home-security system
- 13 The best way to prevent straw bales from rotting is for the purchaser to
- (1) choose small-sized bales
  - (2) buy locally grown straw
  - (3) order bales in bulk quantities
  - (4) inspect straw for dampness
- 14 According to the National Research Council of Canada, the amount of air in straw-bale walls provides insulation as well as
- (1) structural stability                  (3) light filtration
  - (2) fire protection                        (4) storage space
- 15 According to the table, for which cost would a homeowner save between a conventional house built by a contractor and a straw house built by a contractor?
- (1) construction                          (3) energy
  - (2) down payment                        (4) mortgage
- 16 For which type of house are construction costs the lowest?
- (1) conventional built by a contractor
  - (2) straw bale built by a contractor
  - (3) straw bale built by the owner and a contractor
  - (4) straw bale built by the owner

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

Tuesday, January 27, 2009 — 1:15 to 4:15 p.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 \_\_\_\_\_

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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