

The University of the State of New York

REGENTS HIGH SCHOOL EXAMINATION

## COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

IN

## ENGLISH

## SESSION TWO

**Wednesday, January 28, 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 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 (an excerpt from a novel 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 a person's identity as revealed in the passages. In your essay, use ideas from **both** passages to establish a controlling idea about a person's identity. 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 a person's identity
- 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

...There is a reason Gogol doesn't want to go to kindergarten. His parents have told him that at school, instead of being called Gogol, he will be called by a new name, a good name, which his parents have finally decided on, just in time for him to begin his formal education. The name, Nikhil, is artfully connected to the old. Not only is it a perfectly respectable Bengali good name, meaning "he who is entire, encompassing all," but it also bears a satisfying resemblance to Nikolai, the first name of the Russian Gogol.<sup>1</sup> Ashoke<sup>2</sup> had thought of it recently, staring mindlessly at the Gogol spines<sup>3</sup> in the library, and he had rushed back to the house to ask Ashima<sup>4</sup> her opinion. He pointed out that it was relatively easy to pronounce, though there was the danger that Americans, obsessed with abbreviation, would truncate it to Nick. She told him she liked it well enough, though later, alone, she'd wept, thinking of her grandmother, who had died earlier in the year, and of the letter, forever hovering somewhere between India and America, containing the good name she'd chosen for Gogol. Ashima still dreams of the letter at times, discovering it after all these years in the mailbox on Pemberton Road, opening it up only to find it blank.

But Gogol doesn't want a new name. He can't understand why he has to answer to anything else. "Why do I have to have a new name?" he asks his parents, tears springing to his eyes. It would be one thing if his parents were to call him Nikhil, too. But they tell him that the new name will be used only by the teachers and children at school. He is afraid to be Nikhil, someone he doesn't know. Who doesn't know him. His parents tell him that they each have two names, too, as do all their Bengali friends in America, and all their relatives in Calcutta. It's a part of growing up, they tell him, part of being a Bengali. They write it for him on a sheet of paper, ask him to copy it over ten times. "Don't worry," his father says. "To me and your mother, you will never be anyone but Gogol."

At school, Ashoke and Gogol are greeted by the secretary, Mrs. McNab, who asks Ashoke to fill out a registration form. He provides a copy of Gogol's birth certificate and immunization record, which Mrs. McNab puts in a folder along with the registration. "This way," Mrs. McNab says, leading them to the principal's office. CANDACE LAPIDUS, the name on the door says. Mrs. Lapidus assures Ashoke that missing the first week of kindergarten is not a problem, that things have yet to settle down. Mrs. Lapidus is a tall, slender woman with short white-blond hair. She wears frosted blue eye shadow and a lemon yellow suit. She shakes Ashoke's hand and tells him that there are two other Indian children at the school, Jayadev Modi in the third grade and Rekha Saxena in fifth. Perhaps the Gangulis know them? Ashoke tells Mrs. Lapidus that they do not. She looks at the registration form and smiles kindly at the boy, who is clutching his father's hand. Gogol is dressed in powder blue pants, red and white canvas sneakers, a striped turtleneck top.

"Welcome to elementary school, Nikhil. I am your principal, Mrs. Lapidus." Gogol looks down at his sneakers. The way the principal pronounces his new name is different from the way his parents say it, the second part of it longer, sounding like "heel."

<sup>1</sup>Gogol — Nikolai Gogol, Russian author for whom the boy Gogol is named

<sup>2</sup>Ashoke — the boy's father

<sup>3</sup>spines — backbones of books

<sup>4</sup>Ashima — the boy's mother

She bends down so that her face is level with his, and extends a hand to his shoulder. “Can you tell me how old you are, Nikhil?”

When the question is repeated and there is still no response, Mrs. Lapidus asks, “Mr. Ganguli, does Nikhil follow English?”

50 “Of course he follows,” Ashoke says. “My son is perfectly bilingual.”

In order to prove that Gogol knows English, Ashoke does something he has never done before, and addresses his son in careful, accented English. “Go on, Gogol,” he says, patting him on the head. “Tell Mrs. Lapidus how old you are.”

55 “What was that?” Mrs. Lapidus says.

“I beg your pardon, madam?”

“That name you called him. Something with a G.”

“Oh that, that is what we call him at home only. But his good name should be—is”—he nods his head firmly—“Nikhil.”

Mrs. Lapidus frowns. “I’m afraid I don’t understand. Good name?”

60 “Yes.”

Mrs. Lapidus studies the registration form. She has not had to go through this confusion with the other two Indian children. She opens up the folder and examines the immunization record, the birth certificate. “There seems to be some confusion, Mr. Ganguli,” she says. “According to these documents, your son’s legal name is Gogol.”

65 “That is correct. But please allow me to explain —”

“That you want us to call him Nikhil.”

“That is correct.”

Mrs. Lapidus nods. “The reason being?”

70 “That is our wish.”

“I’m not sure I follow you, Mr. Ganguli. Do you mean that Nikhil is a middle name? Or a nickname? Many of the children go by nicknames here. On this form there is a space—”

75 “No, no, it’s not a middle name,” Ashoke says. He is beginning to lose patience. “He has no middle name. No nickname. The boy’s good name, his school name, is Nikhil.”

Mrs. Lapidus presses her lips together and smiles. “But clearly he doesn’t respond.”

80 “Please, Mrs. Lapidus,” Ashoke says. “It is very common for a child to be confused at first. Please give it some time. I assure you he will grow accustomed.”

He bends down and this time in Bengali, calmly and quietly, asks Gogol to please answer when Mrs. Lapidus asks a question. “Don’t be scared, Gogol,” he says, raising his son’s chin with his finger. “You’re a big boy now. No tears.”

85 Though Mrs. Lapidus does not understand a word, she listens carefully, hears that name again. Gogol. Lightly, in pencil, she writes it down on the registration form.

Ashoke hands over the lunch box, a windbreaker in case it gets cold. He thanks Mrs. Lapidus. “Be good, Nikhil,” he says in English. And then, after a moment’s hesitation, he is gone.

90 When they are alone, Mrs. Lapidus asks, “Are you happy to be entering elementary school, Gogol?”

“My parents want me to have another name in school.”

“And what about you, Gogol? Do you want to be called by another name?”

95 After a pause, he shakes his head.

“Is that a no?”

He nods. “Yes.”

“Then it’s settled. Can you write your name on this piece of paper?”

100 he has learned thus far to write from memory, getting the “L” backward due to nerves. “What beautiful penmanship you have,” Mrs. Lapidus says. She tears up the old registration form and asks Mrs. McNab to type up a new one. Then she takes Gogol by the hand, down a carpeted hallway with painted cement walls. She opens a door, and Gogol is introduced to his teacher, Miss Watkins, a woman with  
105 hair in two braids, wearing overalls and clogs. Inside the classroom it’s a small universe of nicknames—Andrew is Andy, Alexandra Sandy, William Billy, Elizabeth Lizzy. It is nothing like the schooling Gogol’s parents have known, fountain pens and polished black shoes and notebooks and good names and sir or madam at a tender age. Here the only official ritual is pledging allegiance first  
110 thing in the morning to the American flag. For the rest of the day, they sit at a communal round table, drinking punch and eating cookies, taking naps on little orange cushions on the floor. At the end of his first day he is sent home with a letter to his parents from Mrs. Lapidus, folded and stapled to a string around his neck, explaining that due to their son’s preference he will be known as Gogol at  
115 school. What about the parents’ preference? Ashima and Ashoke wonder shaking their heads. But since neither of them feels comfortable pressing the issue, they have no choice but to give in....

— Jhumpa Lahiri  
excerpted from *The Namesake*, 2003  
Houghton Mifflin Company

## Passage II

So I said I am Ezra  
and the wind whipped my throat  
gaming<sup>1</sup> for the sounds of my voice  
I listened to the wind  
5 go over my head and up into the night  
Turning to the sea I said  
I am Ezra  
but there were no echoes from the waves  
The words were swallowed up  
10 in the voice of the surf  
or leaping over the swells  
lost themselves oceanward  
Over the bleached and broken fields  
I moved my feet and turning from the wind  
15 that ripped sheets of sand  
from the beach and threw them  
like seamists<sup>2</sup> across the dunes  
swayed as if the wind were taking me away  
and said  
20 I am Ezra  
As a word too much repeated  
falls out of being  
so I Ezra went out into the night  
like a drift of sand  
25 and splashed among the windy oats  
that clutch the dunes  
of unremembered seas

— A. R. Ammons  
from *Ommateum*, 1955  
Dorrance & Company

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<sup>1</sup>gaming — gambling

<sup>2</sup>seamists — sea mists

## 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 novel excerpt) — Questions 1–6 refer to Passage I.

- 1 It is implied that Gogol’s parents are giving him a “new name, a good name” (line 3) because of a
  - (1) political policy
  - (2) legal necessity
  - (3) cultural tradition
  - (4) religious belief
- 2 Gogol’s parents are concerned that Americans would “truncate” (line 11) their son’s name by
  - (1) shortening it to a nickname
  - (2) spelling it to look American
  - (3) refusing to use it
  - (4) ignoring its Indian pronunciation
- 3 By changing his name, Gogol feels he is losing his sense of
  - (1) family
  - (2) friends
  - (3) heritage
  - (4) self
- 4 Ashoke’s reaction to Mrs. Lapidus’ questions concerning his son shows that Ashoke is
  - (1) dependent on his wife’s advice
  - (2) proud and determined to uphold customs
  - (3) uncomfortable with his son’s school
  - (4) concerned and worried about Gogol’s abilities
- 5 When Gogol says that he does not want to be called another name, Mrs. Lapidus’ response suggests her
  - (1) impatience with paperwork
  - (2) desire to make students comfortable
  - (3) need to exercise control
  - (4) concern for the school’s image

- 6 In the final paragraph, the narrator implies that Gogol’s school life will be
  - (1) delayed by official paperwork
  - (2) dependent on parental choices
  - (3) different from that of his parents
  - (4) difficult for him to accept

**Passage II** (the poem) — Questions 7–9 refer to Passage II.

- 7 The poet repeats the phrase “I am Ezra” to emphasize the speaker’s desire
  - (1) to rebel
  - (2) to play
  - (3) for knowledge
  - (4) for recognition
- 8 The sea’s response to the poet’s words (lines 9 through 12) is presented through the use of
  - (1) personification
  - (2) irony
  - (3) onomatopoeia
  - (4) allusion
- 9 Although the speaker is ignored by the wind, the sea, and the fields, he still retains his
  - (1) individuality
  - (2) naturalness
  - (3) foolishness
  - (4) reluctance

**Question 10 refers to both passages.**

- 10 Ezra’s reaction to his situation is similar to that of Gogol’s in that each has been
  - (1) raised to respect authority
  - (2) forced into a new reality
  - (3) embraced by friends and relatives
  - (4) pleased to leave the past behind

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:

“Fear always springs from ignorance.”  
—Ralph Waldo Emerson  
*An Oration Delivered Before the Phi Beta Kappa Society,  
at Cambridge, August 31, 1837*

### 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

Wednesday, January 28, 2009 — 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 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 \_\_\_\_\_
- 8 \_\_\_\_\_
- 9 \_\_\_\_\_
- 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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Tear Here

Tear Here