

The University of the State of New York

REGENTS HIGH SCHOOL EXAMINATION

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

IN

ENGLISH

SESSION TWO

Friday, August 14, 2009 — 8:30 to 11:30 a.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 routines as revealed in the passages. In your essay, use ideas from **both** passages to establish a controlling idea about routines. 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 routines
- 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

...The SunGold Market into which he turned was a large, brilliantly lit place. All the fixtures were chromium and the floors and walls were lined with white tile. Colored spotlights played on the showcases and counters, heightening the natural hues of the different foods. The oranges were bathed in red, the lemons
5 in yellow, the fish in pale green, the steaks in rose and the eggs in ivory.

Homer went directly to the canned goods department and bought a can of mushroom soup and another of sardines. These and a half a pound of soda crackers would be enough for his supper.

10 Out on the street again with his parcel, he started to walk home. When he reached the corner that led to Pinyon Canyon and saw how steep and black the hill looked, he turned back along the lighted boulevard. He thought of waiting until someone else started up the hill, but finally took a taxicab.

15 Although Homer had nothing to do but prepare his scanty meals, he was not bored. Except for the Romola Martin incident¹ and perhaps one or two other widely spaced events, the forty years of his life had been entirely without variety or excitement. As a bookkeeper, he had worked mechanically, totaling figures and making entries with the same impersonal detachment that he now opened cans of soup and made his bed.

20 Someone watching him go about his little cottage might have thought him sleep-walking or partially blind. His hands seemed to have a life and a will of their own. It was they who pulled the sheets tight and shaped the pillows.

25 One day, while opening a can of salmon for lunch, his thumb received a nasty cut. Although the wound must have hurt, the calm, slightly querulous² expression he usually wore did not change. The wounded hand writhed about on the kitchen table until it was carried to the sink by its mate and bathed tenderly in hot water.

30 When not keeping house, he sat in the back yard, called the patio by the real estate agent, in an old broken deck chair. He went out to it immediately after breakfast to bake himself in the sun. In one of the closets he had found a tattered book and he held it in his lap without looking at it.

35 There was a much better view to be had in any direction other than the one he faced. By moving his chair in a quarter circle he could have seen a large part of the canyon twisting down to the city below. He never thought of making this shift. From where he sat, he saw the closed door of the garage and a patch of its shabby, tarpaper roof. In the foreground was a sooty, brick incinerator and a pile of rusty cans. A little to the right of them were the remains of a cactus garden in which a few ragged, tortured plants still survived.

40 One of these, a clump of thick, paddlelike blades, covered with ugly needles, was in bloom. From the tip of several of its topmost blades protruded a bright yellow flower, somewhat like a thistle blossom but coarser. No matter how hard the wind blew, its petals never trembled.

A lizard lived in a hole near the base of this plant. It was about five inches long and had a wedge-shaped head from which darted a fine, forked tongue. It earned a hard living catching the flies that strayed over to the cactus from the pile of cans.

¹the Romola Martin incident — reference to a previous job where he had to ask a woman for her overdue rent

²querulous — constantly complaining

45 The lizard was self-conscious and irritable, and Homer found it very amusing
to watch. Whenever one of its elaborate stalks was foiled, it would shift about
uneasily on its short legs and puff out its throat. Its coloring matched the cactus
perfectly, but when it moved over to the cans where the flies were thick, it stood
50 out very plainly. It would sit on the cactus by the hour without moving, then
become impatient and start for the cans. The flies would spot it immediately and
after several misses, it would sneak back sheepishly to its original post.

Homer was on the side of the flies. Whenever one of them, swinging too
widely, would pass the cactus, he prayed silently for it to keep on going or turn
back. If it lighted, he watched the lizard begin its stalk and held his breath until
55 it had killed, hoping all the while that something would warn the fly. But no
matter how much he wanted the fly to escape, he never thought of interfering,
and was careful not to budge or make the slightest noise. Occasionally the lizard
would miscalculate. When that happened Homer would laugh happily.

60 Between the sun, the lizard and the house, he was fairly well occupied. But
whether he was happy or not it is hard to say. Probably he was neither, just as a
plant is neither. He had memories to disturb him and a plant hasn't, but after the
first bad night his memories were quiet....

—Nathanael West
excerpted from *The Day of the Locust*, 1939
The Vail-Ballou Press, Inc.

Passage II

Habit

The shoes put on each time
left first, then right.

The morning potion's teaspoon
of sweetness stirred always
5 for seven circlings—no fewer, no more—
into the cracked blue cup.

Touching the pocket for wallet,
for keys,
before closing the door.

10 How did we come
to believe these small rituals' promise,
that we are today the selves we yesterday knew,
tomorrow will be?

15 How intimate and unthinking,
the way the toothbrush is shaken dry after use,
the part we wash first in the bath.

Which habits we learned from others
and which are ours alone we may never know.
Unbearable to acknowledge
20 how much they are themselves our fated life.

Open the traveling suitcase—

There the beloved red sweater,
bright tangle of necklace, earrings of amber.
Each confirming: I chose these, I.

25 But habit is different: it chooses.
And we, its good horse,
opening our mouths at even the sight of the bit.

—Jane Hirshfield
from *Slate*, March 15, 2000

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 1–7 refer to Passage I.

- 1 The colored spotlights in the SunGold Market were probably used to
 - (1) hide food's flaws
 - (2) speed fruit's ripeness
 - (3) attract customers' attention
 - (4) protect workers' safety
- 2 Homer's actions at the market suggest his purchases were
 - (1) unhealthy
 - (2) planned
 - (3) unnecessary
 - (4) expensive
- 3 Homer's trip home from the market illustrates his
 - (1) caution
 - (2) thrift
 - (3) friendliness
 - (4) irritability
- 4 The lack of excitement in Homer's life was reinforced by his
 - (1) clothing
 - (2) family
 - (3) marriage
 - (4) occupation
- 5 The personification used in lines 20 and 21 suggests Homer's feelings of
 - (1) power
 - (2) anger
 - (3) detachment
 - (4) pride
- 6 The narrator probably uses the deck chair (line 27) to suggest Homer's
 - (1) resistance to change
 - (2) desire for comfort
 - (3) connection to nature
 - (4) need for freedom

7 Homer's chosen view from his patio can best be described as

- (1) rural
- (2) depressing
- (3) colorful
- (4) frightening

Passage II (the poem) — Questions 8–10 refer to Passage II.

8 Lines 1 through 9 include a series of

- (1) common fears
- (2) everyday actions
- (3) important lessons
- (4) cherished memories

9 According to the poem, people view "small rituals" (line 11) as a way to preserve their

- (1) wealth
- (2) intelligence
- (3) potential
- (4) identity

10 The contents of the traveling suitcase (lines 21 through 24) most likely symbolize

- (1) self-awareness
- (2) careful organization
- (3) a love of fashion
- (4) a desire to escape

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:

“It is only with the heart that one can see rightly...”

—Antoine de Saint-Exupéry
The Little Prince, 1943

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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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

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