

The University of the State of New York

REGENTS HIGH SCHOOL EXAMINATION

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

IN

ENGLISH

SESSION TWO

Friday, June 16, 2006 — 9:15 a.m. to 12:15 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 (a poem and an excerpt from a short story). 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 the power of reading as revealed in the passages. In your essay, use ideas from **both** passages to establish a controlling idea about the power of reading. 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 the power of reading
- 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 Reader

She is going back, these days, to the great stories
That charmed her younger mind. A shaded light
Shines on the nape half-shadowed by her curls,
And a page turns now with a scuffing sound.
5 Onward they come again, the orphans reaching
For a first handhold in a stony world,
The young provincials who at last look down
On the city's maze, and will descend into it,
The serious girl, once more, who would live nobly,
10 The sly one who aspires to marry so,
The young man bent on glory, and that other
Who seeks a burden. Knowing as she does
What will become of them in bloody field
Or Tuscan garden, it may be that at times
15 She sees their first and final selves at once,
As a god might to whom all time is now.
Or, having lived so much herself, perhaps
She meets them this time with a wiser eye,
Noting that Julien's calculating head
20 Is from the first too severed from his heart.
But the true wonder of it is that she,
For all that she may know of consequences,
Still turns enchanted to the next bright page
Like some Natasha in the ballroom door—
25 Caught in the flow of things wherever bound,
The blind delight of being, ready still
To enter life on life and see them through.

—Richard Wilbur
from *The New Yorker*
October 1, 2001

Passage II

One day, in the illustrious nation of Panduria, a suspicion crept into the minds of top officials: that books contained opinions hostile to military prestige. In fact trials and enquiries had revealed that the tendency, now so widespread, of thinking of generals as people actually capable of making mistakes and causing catastrophes, and of wars as things that did not always amount to splendid cavalry charges towards a glorious destiny, was shared by a large number of books, ancient and modern, foreign and Pandurese.

Panduria's General Staff met together to assess the situation. But they didn't know where to begin, because none of them was particularly well-versed in matters bibliographical. A commission of enquiry was set up under General Fedina, a severe and scrupulous official. The commission was to examine all the books in the biggest library in Panduria...

The military took over the library one rainy morning in November. The general climbed off his horse, squat, stiff, his thick neck shaven, his eyebrows frowning over pince-nez¹; four lanky lieutenants, chins held high and eyelids lowered, got out of a car, each with a briefcase in his hand. Then came a squadron of soldiers who set up camp in the old courtyard, with mules, bales of hay, tents, cooking equipment, camp radio, and signalling flags....

Of the library staff, only one little old man, Signor Crispino, was kept so that he could explain to the officers how the books were arranged. He was a shortish fellow, with a bald, eggish pate and eyes like pinheads behind his spectacles....

Then duties were assigned. Each lieutenant was allotted a particular branch of knowledge, a particular century of history. The general was to oversee the sorting of the volumes and the application of an appropriate rubber stamp depending on whether a book had been judged suitable for officers, NCOs², common soldiers, or should be reported to the Military Court.

And the commission began its appointed task. Every evening the camp radio transmitted General Fedina's report to HQ. 'So many books examined. So many seized as suspect. So many declared suitable for officers and soldiers.' Only rarely were these cold figures accompanied by something out of the ordinary: a request for a pair of glasses to correct short-sightedness for an officer who had broken his, the news that a mule had eaten a rare manuscript edition of Cicero left unattended.

But developments of far greater import were under way, about which the camp radio transmitted no news at all. Rather than thinning out, the forest of books seemed to grow ever more tangled and insidious. The officers would have lost their way had it not been for the help of Signor Crispino. Lieutenant Abrogati, for example, would jump to his feet and throw the book he was reading down on the table: 'But this is outrageous! A book about the Punic Wars that speaks well of the Carthaginians and criticizes the Romans! This must be reported at once!' (It should be said here that, rightly or wrongly, the Pandurians considered themselves descendants of the Romans.) Moving silently in soft slippers, the old librarian came up to him. 'That's nothing,' he would say, 'read what it says here, about the Romans again, you can put this in your report too, and this and this,' and he presented him with a pile of books. The lieutenant leafed nervously through them, then, getting interested, he began to read, to take notes. And he would scratch his head and mutter: 'For heaven's sake! The things you learn! Who would ever have thought!' Signor Crispino went over to

¹pince-nez — eyeglasses clipped to the nose by a spring

²NCOs — noncommissioned officers

50 Lieutenant Lucchetti who was closing a tome³ in rage, declaring: ‘Nice stuff this is! These people have the audacity to entertain doubts as to the purity of the ideals that inspired the Crusades! Yessir, the Crusades!’ And Signor Crispino said with a smile: ‘Oh, but look, if you have to make a report on that subject, may I suggest a few other books that will offer more details,’ and he pulled down half a shelf-full. Lieutenant Lucchetti leaned forward and got stuck in, and for a week you could
55 hear him flicking through the pages and muttering: ‘These Crusades though, very nice I must say!’

In the commission’s evening report, the number of books examined got bigger and bigger, but they no longer provided figures relative to positive and negative verdicts. General Fedina’s rubber stamps lay idle. If, trying to check up on the
60 work of one of the lieutenants, he asked, ‘But why did you pass this novel? The soldiers come off better than the officers! This author has no respect for hierarchy!’, the lieutenant would answer by quoting other authors and getting all muddled up in matters historical, philosophical and economic. This led to open discussions that went on for hours and hours. Moving silently in his slippers,
65 almost invisible in his grey shirt, Signor Crispino would always join in at the right moment, offering some book which he felt contained interesting information on the subject under consideration, and which always had the effect of radically undermining General Fedina’s convictions....

Not much is known about the progress of the commission’s work: what
70 happened in the library through the long winter weeks was not reported. All we know is that General Fedina’s radio reports to General Staff headquarters became ever more infrequent until finally they stopped altogether. The Chief of Staff was alarmed; he transmitted the order to wind up the enquiry as quickly as possible and present a full and detailed report.

75 In the library, the order found the minds of Fedina and his men prey to conflicting sentiments: on the one hand they were constantly discovering new interests to satisfy and were enjoying their reading and studies more than they would ever have imagined; on the other hand they couldn’t wait to be back in the world again, to take up life again, a world and a life that seemed so much more
80 complex now, as though renewed before their very eyes; and on yet another hand, the fact that the day was fast approaching when they would have to leave the library filled them with apprehension, for they would have to give an account of their mission, and with all the ideas that were bubbling up in their heads they had no idea how to get out of what had become a very tight corner indeed....

85 One bright morning the commission finally left the library and went to report to the Chief of Staff; and Fedina illustrated the results of the enquiry before an assembly of the General Staff. His speech was a kind of compendium⁴ of human history from its origins down to the present day, a compendium in which all those ideas considered beyond discussion by the right-minded folk of Panduria were
90 attacked, in which the ruling classes were declared responsible for the nation’s misfortunes, and the people exalted as the heroic victims of mistaken policies and unnecessary wars. It was a somewhat confused presentation including, as can happen with those who have only recently embraced new ideas, declarations that were often simplistic and contradictory. But as to the overall meaning there could
95 be no doubt. The assembly of generals was stunned, their eyes opened wide, then they found their voices and began to shout. General Fedina was not even allowed to finish. There was talk of a court-martial, of his being reduced to the ranks. Then, afraid there might be a more serious scandal, the general and the four

³tome — large book

⁴compendium — summary

100 lieutenants were each pensioned off for health reasons, as a result of ‘a serious nervous breakdown suffered in the course of duty’. Dressed in civilian clothes, with heavy coats and thick sweaters so as not to freeze, they were often to be seen going into the old library where Signor Crispino would be waiting for them with his books.

—Italo Calvino
excerpted from “A General in the Library”
Numbers in the Dark and Other Stories, 1995
Jonathan Cape Ltd.

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 poem) — Questions 1–5 refer to Passage I.

- 1 “She is going back, these days” (line 1) indicates that the reader is
 - (1) looking at old photographs
 - (2) rearranging a library
 - (3) rereading old books
 - (4) searching for new books
- 2 Who are the people described in lines 5 through 12?
 - (1) friends from childhood
 - (2) characters from literature
 - (3) famous actors
 - (4) noted authors
- 3 The “bloody field” (line 13) and the “Tuscan garden” (line 14) suggest the reader’s interest in the
 - (1) setting
 - (2) plot
 - (3) character
 - (4) point of view
- 4 The paradox in line 15 indicates that the reader
 - (1) guesses her future
 - (2) regrets her childhood
 - (3) invents the characters
 - (4) knows the endings
- 5 In line 18, “a wiser eye” implies that the reader now has
 - (1) superior goals
 - (2) better eyesight
 - (3) greater insight
 - (4) stronger opinions

Passage II (the excerpt from a short story) — Questions 6–10 refer to Passage II.

- 6 What is the commission’s “appointed task” (line 27)?
 - (1) taking an inventory
 - (2) censoring books
 - (3) writing regulations
 - (4) protecting the library
- 7 The statement, “General Fedina’s rubber stamps lay idle,” (line 59) emphasizes that the men were unable to
 - (1) comprehend complex material
 - (2) consider original sources
 - (3) reconfigure the library’s contents
 - (4) perform their assigned task
- 8 The word “undermining,” as used in line 68, most nearly means
 - (1) harvesting
 - (2) studying
 - (3) contradicting
 - (4) repeating
- 9 General Fedina and his lieutenants avoided a court-martial because the assembly of generals wished to
 - (1) prevent a scandal
 - (2) close the library
 - (3) cure nervous breakdowns
 - (4) publish the results
- 10 An ironic result of the mission was that the soldiers
 - (1) left Panduria for good
 - (2) returned to active duty
 - (3) received promotion in rank
 - (4) returned to the library

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:

“The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.”
—Martin Luther King, Jr.
Strength to Love, 1963

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

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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

Tear Here