

The University of the State of New York

REGENTS HIGH SCHOOL EXAMINATION

## COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

IN

## ENGLISH

## SESSION TWO

**Wednesday, January 23, 2008 — 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 memoir 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 parenting as revealed in the passages. In your essay, use ideas from **both** passages to establish a controlling idea about parenting. 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 parenting
- 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

My father was tall. His shoes, in the glinty gravel, could have belonged to a giant. I saw them through the sparkle of water drops as I floated on my back in the section of the pool called Perch. My father wore a suit and tie, and in the summer sun he stood, his hands in his pockets, his suit coat bunched back lightly at the hips. Frog-kicking, spreading my arms out and down, I moved my way  
5 along, my father's huge shoes in sight.

"I 'spect you can do it," he said when I stepped from the pool and stood shivering. He meant he thought I could pass the test required to be able to swim in the deeper section of the pool, called Salmon. I must have been eight years  
10 old at the time. "Maybe I'll try tomorrow," I said. But as soon as my father went back to his office, I asked the lifeguard if I could take the test for Salmon. The lifeguard watched, his arms crossed, as I swam on my back the length of Perch. While I had asked my father to come to the pool to watch the dress rehearsal, I was afraid to take the actual test in front of him. It was not his displeasure I  
15 feared, if I failed — I don't imagine he would have experienced any displeasure. I imagine, in fact, he would have shrugged and told me to try again another day. But I would have felt, I think, an almost unbearable level of shame to fail in front of my father. I passed into Salmon that day, and a week later I could swim in Shark. That's where the big kids were, and the diving board....

My father was a parasitologist<sup>1</sup> at the University of New Hampshire, and during the years I'm speaking of, when I was seven, eight, nine, and ten, his office was in Nesmith Hall. This was an old building with a large front lawn, and since his office was in a sort of half basement, the windows looked out directly onto the  
25 lawn. I could squat down in my wet bathing suit and call to him through the open window. In my memory, he was always glad to see me, but I know too that he was often distracted, his mind frequently somewhere else.

At that time my father was on twelve-month appointment, which meant he worked through the summer. Every summer weekday I would go with him into town, either riding on the back baskets of his bicycle or, when I was old enough,  
30 riding my own bicycle. He went to his office, I went to the swimming pool. There was always that little taste of chlorine on my lips; the tips of my blond hair would turn green from it. The swimming pool was where I wanted to be, and whenever I learned something new, a different way to roll over under water, to dive without holding my nose, my father was the one I wanted watching me. I  
35 felt sad on the days it rained, as though I had been shut out of a sparkling mansion filled with sunlit rooms.

I don't remember my father ever once getting into what he called the "cesspool." But he did love the water. He loved being on the water, especially the ocean. Any kind of boat ride seemed to give him pleasure. And he loved to  
40 fish. He had a few men he would go fishing with, and sometimes he took me along. Three men sitting in a small outboard motorboat, and very seldom was a fish pulled in. One day a man named Jack — who liked to collect old glass bottles — suddenly said to me, "Stop talking so much, you're scaring the fish away." I sat silently on the pile of rope at the front of the boat, and then leaned  
45 forward and whispered to my father to ask if that was true: could the fish really hear me that far under the water? "No," he said, shaking his head, "you're all right."

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<sup>1</sup>parasitologist—one who studies the branch of biology dealing with parasites

50 But I never really liked being on the water, the way my father did. I liked  
being in the water, moving through it, having it all around me. I was not an  
especially strong swimmer, or one who learned to swim early; I had my fears. But  
I loved being in the swimming pool at the university, and those summer days  
spent there are bound up with my father, who would come by on a break if I  
asked him to. I needed him to see what the latest thing was I could do, whether  
it was swimming on my back in Perch or, later, a somersault off the diving board.  
55 My father would stand there in his suit, the only person not in bathing attire.

The pool was not far from my father's office, and at four o'clock, in order to  
avoid crossing the main street, which included corners of busy traffic, I would  
take a path around behind the dairy barn, under a bridge by the railroad tracks,  
and arrive at my father's office, dripping wet. If he still had work to do, I would  
60 play on the front lawn out front, trying out my cartwheels, or trying to whistle  
through a blade of grass, or looking for a four-leaf clover, which I don't believe I  
ever found. Sometimes I would go inside and sit on the wooden swivel chair in  
front of his big wooden desk, where he let me play with anything I found in his  
top desk drawer...

65 Sometimes, if I was left alone at his desk while he worked in the lab, a lab  
assistant or a student might come in and tell me perhaps I shouldn't be peeling  
back that red pencil or using so much paper. But my father always showed up  
and said easily, "Oh, no, it's fine." At work he wore a white lab coat over his suit.  
In the pockets would be peppermint LifeSavers, and in his desk drawer Licorice  
70 Nibs. "Sure," he would say when I asked for one. Sometimes he handed me  
coins and told me to run over and get myself an ice cream cone. Barefoot, I  
would walk back under the railroad bridge and get my ice cream at the dairy barn.  
I got chocolate: my favorite, and his.

75 In the vast terrain of memory, many things live. The poet Louise Glück has  
said, "We look at life once, in childhood; the rest is memory." There is much to  
look at once; and the sunlit lawns, the sparkle of the pool's water, the red pencil's  
thick, oily line on paper, the bottom of a soggy, chocolate-soaked waffle cone —  
all these things seem to present to me, in middle age, the most innocent part of  
my childhood. They have come to represent, in fact, what I call joy. What I call  
80 hope. There are times when we need to remember the feelings of joy and hope.  
And I think it is not only what we "look at once, in childhood" that determines  
our memories, but who, in that childhood, looks at us...

—Elizabeth Strout  
excerpted from "The Swimming Pool,"  
*Dream Me Home Safely*, 2003  
Houghton Mifflin

## Passage II

### Night Light

Only your plastic night light dusts its pink  
on the backs and undersides of things; your mother,  
head resting on the nightside of one arm,  
floats a hand above your cradle  
5 to feel the humid tendril<sup>1</sup> of your breathing.  
Outside, the night rocks, murmurs ... Crouched  
in this eggshell light, I feel my heart  
slowing, opened to your tiny flame

as if your blue irises mirrored me  
10 as if your smile breathed and warmed  
and curled in your face which is only asleep.  
There is space between me, I know,  
and you. I hang above you like a planet—  
you're a planet, too. One planet loves the other.

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<sup>1</sup>tendril — something resembling a long, slender, coiling extension on a plant stem

—Anne Winters  
from *The Key to the City*, 1986  
The University of Chicago Press

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

- 1 The description of the father (lines 1 through 6) reflects the daughter's feelings of
  - (1) anger
  - (2) unhappiness
  - (3) admiration
  - (4) curiosity
- 2 The narrator took the swim test after her father had left the pool area because she was
  - (1) reluctant to compete
  - (2) in need of practice
  - (3) afraid of deep water
  - (4) ashamed to fail
- 3 The narrator enjoyed the university swimming pool because it was
  - (1) near her father's office
  - (2) close to other children
  - (3) surrounded by beautiful houses
  - (4) far from her school
- 4 In middle age, the narrator realizes that the most important influence on one's childhood is
  - (1) places traveled
  - (2) attention received
  - (3) schools attended
  - (4) sports played
- 5 Throughout the passage, the girl's father is portrayed as
  - (1) talkative and intelligent
  - (2) stern and unyielding
  - (3) rebellious and questioning
  - (4) generous and kind

6 The tone of the final paragraph can best be described as

- (1) chatty
- (2) humorous
- (3) sarcastic
- (4) philosophical

**Passage II** (the poem) — Questions 7–10 refer to Passage II.

7 The mother's action in lines 4 and 5 demonstrates her

- (1) need for sleep
- (2) desire for understanding
- (3) concern for the child
- (4) wish for the dawn

8 The poet's use of the pronoun "I" reveals that the

- (1) child has awakened
- (2) mother is the narrator
- (3) poet is the observer
- (4) father has arrived

9 The phrase "blue irises" (line 9) refers to the

- (1) eyes of the child
- (2) photos near the cradle
- (3) flowers below the window
- (4) sky above the house

10 Lines 13 and 14 convey the concept that the parent and child are

- (1) uninterested
- (2) unhappy
- (3) lonely
- (4) connected

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:

“Greatness lies not in being strong, but in the right using of strength....”

—Henry Ward Beecher  
*Life Thoughts*, 1858

### 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 _____ | 6 _____  |
| 2 _____ | 7 _____  |
| 3 _____ | 8 _____  |
| 4 _____ | 9 _____  |
| 5 _____ | 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.

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Signature

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