

The University of the State of New York

REGENTS HIGH SCHOOL EXAMINATION

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

IN

ENGLISH

SESSION TWO

Thursday, August 14, 2008 — 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 an autobiography and an excerpt from a novel). 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 effect of a particular location as revealed in the passages. In your essay, use ideas from **both** passages to establish a controlling idea about the effect of a particular location. 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 effect of a particular location
- 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

When I left home for college, I sought to escape the provincial¹ world of farmers, small towns, and country life. I longed for the excitement of the city, for the intensity that rural life lacked, for adventure beyond the horizon. I dreamed of exploring the city, living within a new culture and landscape, becoming part of the pulse of an urban jungle.

Yet some of my best times were driving home, leaving the city behind and slipping back into the valley. As city life faded and traffic thinned, I could see the faces of the other drivers relax. Then, around a bend in the highway, the rangelands of the valley would materialize, revealing a horizon of gentle rolling mounds. The land seemed eternal and permanent. I felt as if I had stepped back in time.

I took comfort in the stability of the valley. Driving through small farm communities, I imagined the founding families still rooted in their stately homes, generations working the same lands, neighbors remaining neighbors for generations. Small farms dominated the vista. I allowed familiar barn and farmhouse landmarks to guide me.

Close to home, I often turned off the main highway and took different routes, reacquainting myself with farms and testing my memory. Friends lived in those houses. I had eaten meals and spent time there; I had worked on some of these farms, lending a hand during a peak harvest, helping a family friend for a day or two. The houses and lands looked the same, and I could picture the gentle faces and hear familiar voices as if little had been altered. As I eased into our driveway I'd revert to old ways, becoming a son once again, a child on the family farm.

My feelings were honest and real. But my eyes deceived me, tainted by my longing for a touchstone—a land where life stood still and my memories could be relived. When I left the farm for college, I could only return as a visitor to the valley, a traveler looking for home.

Now the farm is once again my true home. I live in that farmhouse and work the eternal lands. My world may seem unchanged to casual observers, but they are wrong. I now know this: if there's a constant on these farms, it's the constant of change.

The keen observer will recognize the differences. A farmer replants an orchard with a new variety of peaches. Drip irrigation is added to a block of old grapes, so I imagine the vineyard has a new owner—perhaps a younger farmer with many more years ahead to recover the costs—or the farm is now part of a larger operation with capital reserves to finance the improvement. Occasionally the changes are clearly evident, like a FOR SALE sign. But I need to read the small print in order to discern if the seller is a bank that foreclosed on the farmer. Most of the changes contain two stories. One is the physical alteration of the farm, the other involves the people on that land, the human story behind the change.

I've been back on the farm for a decade and still haven't heard all the stories behind the changes around me. But once I add my stories to the landscape, I can call this place my home, a home that continues to evolve and change as I add more and more of my stories.

¹provincial — restricted in interest or outlook

A poet returns to the valley and proclaims, “How closed-minded you all are.”
He comments about the lack of interest in the arts, in social and environmental
issues, in the poverty and inequality of our life. “Little has changed in the valley.”

50 He was born and raised here, which supposedly grants him license to criticize
and lecture us. Yet he speaks for many who think they know the valley.

How differently would others think of us if they knew the stories of a raisin
harvest in a wet year or a peach without a home?...

—David Mas Masumoto
excerpted from *Epitaph for a Peach*, 1995
HarperSanFrancisco

Passage II

...We went there every year for our summer holidays. I do not suppose, now, that it was a very large house, but it seemed enormous then. I had a nursery on the top floor and every morning I woke up there, except for the day or two before the horrid end of the holidays, seemed a renewal of happiness. In my memory
5 the sun always shone at Blithbury though I do not think there was really anything especially remarkable about the climate in Staffordshire in the 1920s.

My parents lived in the South of France for most of the year. It was their home, but for me home was not on the Riviera but at Blithbury. When I went there twice a year on leave from school, I would be looked after by my
10 redoubtable¹ aunt, who lived there all the time and was the merriest of spinsters². When the car collecting me from the station turned the corner into the little park and I saw the house in the distance I would feel I was back where I belonged.

I remember the house with almost painful clarity. I am sure it was Blithbury that gave me the feeling for beauty which for me is one of the most important
15 values in the world. Everything there was calculated to please, from the panelled hall with its portraits of our rather brief lineage supplemented by a few eighteenth-century ladies and gentlemen who came with the house, to the narrow, creaking housemaids' corridor, scrubbed by generations of Staffordshire lasses. My aunt kept the house in impeccable order, and it was filled with a sense of
20 cleanliness and care. It had a smell of beeswax, and soap, and roses, and old leather, at least I suppose those were the ingredients. I have hardly found that smell anywhere else and nowadays it probably scarcely exists.

The library was my favourite room. It had been added to an older house in the late eighteenth century, by James Wyatt³ we liked to think. It retained its
25 original bookcases and a marble chimneypiece with rams' heads in the corners, and everything in the room, the curtains, the carpets, the backs of the books, seemed to have faded to the same soft honey colour. It had a large table for a dozen readers, but there were seldom any readers there apart from me. Even on the brightest days, when sun and sports beckoned, I found myself drawn to the
30 library, wanting to read everything in the world, impelled by the pleasures and dangers and excitements awaiting me between the covers of books. It became known as my room, and when I was needed someone always looked for me in the library.

The garden I loved almost as much. The house stood on a little hill, with
35 hanging woods (on a modest scale) beneath it. Stretching to the south was a series of lakes, connected by streams with little bridges over them. Huge elms overhung the lakes, and in summer when one rowed or punted around, one seemed to be in an enchanted landscape, shaded by great trees, with lapping water all around one and in the distance the prospect of smiling countryside where nonetheless
40 giants might lurk. During those afternoons, the lakes would be almost silent, with only the wood pigeons to disturb the stillness.

Recently, the house was destroyed. Nobody wants to live now in a place devoted to beauty, and elegance, and peace. They prefer to live in bungalows⁴ along the arterial road. And with the house my childhood disappeared, too.

—Giles Waterfield
excerpted from *The Long Afternoon*, 2000
Review

¹redoubtable — inspiring reverence

²spinster — an unmarried woman

³James Wyatt — a famous eighteenth-century architect

⁴bungalow — a one-story cottage

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 autobiographical excerpt) — Questions 1–5 refer to Passage I.

- 1 The narrator originally views his move to college as a benefit because he can
 - (1) earn more money
 - (2) have new experiences
 - (3) meet some celebrities
 - (4) make many friends

- 2 In lines 22 and 23, the narrator’s return to the family brings about a change in his
 - (1) self-image
 - (2) personal finances
 - (3) time schedule
 - (4) well-being

- 3 In lines 30 and 31, the nature of change on farms is emphasized through the use of
 - (1) personification
 - (2) simile
 - (3) irony
 - (4) hyperbole

- 4 In lines 33 through 36, the narrator implies that decisions about farms are primarily driven by
 - (1) economics
 - (2) education
 - (3) weather
 - (4) legislation

- 5 The narrator believes that the poet’s criticism of the valley is based on the poet’s
 - (1) environmental activity
 - (2) prejudiced acquaintances
 - (3) difficult childhood
 - (4) limited viewpoint

Passage II (the novel excerpt) — Questions 6–10 refer to Passage II.

- 6 The narrator is telling the story of Blithbury Hall from the perspective of
 - (1) an owner
 - (2) an adult
 - (3) a developer
 - (4) a judge

- 7 Where does the narrator believe that his appreciation of beauty was developed?
 - (1) in his aunt’s mansion
 - (2) at a French villa
 - (3) at his boarding school
 - (4) in a local bungalow

- 8 The narrator reinforces the idea of “cleanliness and care” (line 20) through his use of
 - (1) situational irony
 - (2) direct quotation
 - (3) sensory imagery
 - (4) extended metaphor

- 9 In line 40, the word “giants” seems to suggest a
 - (1) sailor’s warning
 - (2) future problem
 - (3) child’s imagination
 - (4) modern achievement

- 10 According to the narrator, Blithbury Hall was destroyed because of
 - (1) financial problems
 - (2) natural disasters
 - (3) ongoing wars
 - (4) current attitudes

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:

“The real hero is always a hero by mistake...”
—Umberto Eco
Travels in Hyperreality, 1986

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