

The University of the State of New York

REGENTS HIGH SCHOOL EXAMINATION

REGENTS EXAMINATION

IN

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Tuesday, January 23, 2024 — 9:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m., only

The possession or use of any communications device is strictly prohibited when taking this examination. If you have or use any communications device, no matter how briefly, your examination will be invalidated and no score will be calculated for you.

A separate answer sheet has been provided for you. Follow the instructions for completing the student information on your answer sheet. You must also fill in the heading on each page of your essay booklet that has a space for it, and write your name at the top of each sheet of scrap paper.

The examination has three parts. For Part 1, you are to read the texts and answer all 24 multiple-choice questions. For Part 2, you are to read the texts and write one source-based argument. For Part 3, you are to read the text and write a text-analysis response. The source-based argument and text-analysis response should be written in pen. Keep in mind that the language and perspectives in a text may reflect the historical and/or cultural context of the time or place in which it was written.

When you have completed the examination, you must sign the statement printed at the bottom of the front of the answer sheet, indicating that you had no unlawful knowledge of the questions or answers prior to the examination and that you have neither given nor received assistance in answering any of the questions during the examination. Your answer sheet cannot be accepted if you fail to sign this declaration.

DO NOT OPEN THIS EXAMINATION BOOKLET UNTIL THE SIGNAL IS GIVEN.

Part 1

Directions (1–24): Closely read each of the three passages below. After each passage, there are several multiple-choice questions. Select the best suggested answer to each question and record your answer on the separate answer sheet provided for you. You may use the margins to take notes as you read.

Reading Comprehension Passage A

The Accursed House

In this excerpt from a short story, the landlord of an apartment building lowers the rent and the tenants react in an unexpected manner.

The Vicomte¹ de B—, an amiable and charming young man, was peacefully enjoying an income of 30,000 livres yearly, when, unfortunately for him, his uncle, a miser of the worst species, died, leaving him all his wealth, amounting to nearly two millions.

5 In running through the documents of succession, the Vicomte de B— learned that he was the proprietor of a house in the Rue de la Victoire. He learned, also, that the unfurnished building, bought in 1849 for 300,000 francs, now brought in, clear of taxes, rentals of 82,000 francs a year.

10 “Too much, too much, entirely,” thought the generous vicomte, “my uncle was too hard; to rent at this price is usury,² one can not deny it. When one bears a great name like mine, one should not lend himself to such plundering. I will begin tomorrow to lower rents, and my tenants will bless me.”

With this excellent purpose in view, the Vicomte de B— sent immediately for the *concièrge*³ of the building, who presented himself as promptly, with back bent like a bow.

15 “Bernard, my friend,” said the vicomte, “go at once from me and notify all your tenants that I lower their rents by one-third.”

That unheard-of word “lower” fell like a brick on Bernard’s head. But he quickly recovered himself; he had heard badly; he had not understood.

“Low—er the rents!” stammered he. “Monsieur le Vicomte deigns to jest. Lower! Monsieur, of course means to raise the rents.”

20 “I was never more serious in my life, my friend,” the vicomte returned; “I said, and repeat, lower the rents.”

This time the *concièrge* was surprised to the point of bewilderment—so thrown off his balance that he forgot himself and lost all restraint.

25 “Monsieur has not reflected,” persisted he. “Monsieur will regret this evening. Lower the tenants’ rents! Never was such a thing known, monsieur! If the lodgers should learn of it, what would they think of monsieur? What would people say in the neighborhood? Truly—” ...

Staggering like a drunken man, Monsieur Bernard went out from the house of his proprietor. ...

30 Next morning, Bernard, buttoning himself into his best frock coat, made the rounds of the three-and-twenty apartments to announce his great news.

¹Vicomte — a French title of nobility

²usury — robbery

³concièrge — superintendent

Ten minutes afterward the house in the Rue de la Victoire was in a state of commotion impossible to describe. People who, for forty years had lived on the same floor, and never honored each other with so much as a tip of the hat, now clustered together and chatted eagerly.

35 “Do you know, monsieur?”

“It is very extraordinary.”

“Simply unheard of!”

“The proprietor’s lowered my rent!”

40 “One-third, is it not? Mine also.”

“Astounding! It *must* be a mistake!” ...

Three of them actually wrote to the proprietor to tell him what had passed, and to charitably warn him that his *concièrge* had wholly lost his mind. The proprietor responded to these skeptics, confirming what Bernard had said.

45 Then began reflections and commentaries.

“*Why* had the proprietor lowered his rents?”

“Yes, *why*?”

“What motives,” said they all, “actuate this strange man? For certainly he must have grave reasons for a step like this! An intelligent man, a man of good sense, would never deprive himself of good fat revenues, well secured, for the simple pleasure of depriving himself. One would not conduct himself thus without being forced, constrained⁴ by powerful circumstances.”

And each said to himself:

“*There is something under all this!*”

55 “But what?”

And from the first floor to the sixth they sought and conjectured⁵ and delved in their brains. Every lodger had the preoccupied air of a man who strives with all his wits to solve an impossible cipher,⁶ and everywhere there began to be a vague disquiet, as it happens when one finds himself in the presence of a sinister mystery.

60 Some one went so far as to hazard:

“This man must have committed a great and still hidden crime; remorse pushes him to philanthropy.”⁷

It was not a pleasant idea, either, the thought of living thus side by side with a rascal; no, by no means; he might be repentant, and all that, but suppose he yielded to temptation once more!

65 “The house, perhaps, was badly built?” questioned another, anxiously.

Hum-m, so-so! no one could tell; but all knew one thing—it was very old!

“True! and it had been necessary to prop it when they dug the drain last year in the month of March.”

70 “Maybe it was the roof, then, and the house is top-heavy?” suggested a tenant on the fifth floor.

“Or perhaps,” said a lodger in the garret,⁸ “there is a press for coining counterfeit money in the cellar; I have often heard at night a sound like the dull, muffled thud of a coin-stamper.” ...

⁴constrained — controlled

⁵conjectured — guessed

⁶cipher — code

⁷philanthropy — helping others

⁸garret — attic

75 Then began to happen, as they all declared, extraordinary and even frightful things. On the sixth and mansard floors⁹ it appeared that strange and absolutely inexplicable noises were heard. Then the nurse of the old lady on the fourth story, going one night to steal wine from the cellar, encountered the ghost of the defunct proprietor—he even held in his hand a receipt for rent.

80 And the refrain from aloft to cellar was:

“There *is* something under all this!”

From disquietude¹⁰ it had come to fright; from fright it quickly passed to terror. So that the gentleman of the first floor, who had valuables in his rooms, made up his mind to go, and sent in notice by his clerk. . . .

85 From that moment it was a general rout.¹¹ By the end of the week, everybody had given notice. Every one awaited some frightful catastrophe. They slept no more. They organized patrols. The terrified domestics swore that they too would quit the accursed house and remained temporarily only on tripled wages.

90 Bernard was no more than the ghost of himself; the fever of fear had worn him to a shadow. . . .

Meanwhile three-and-twenty “For Rent” placards swung against the façade of the house, drawing an occasional applicant for lodgings.

Bernard—never grumbling now—climbed the staircase and ushered the visitor from apartment to apartment.

95 “You can have your choice,” said he “the house is entirely vacant; all the tenants have given notice as one man. They do not know why, exactly, but things have happened, oh! yes, *things!* a mystery such as was never before known—the *proprietor has lowered his rents!*”

And the would-be lodgers fled away affrighted.

100 The term ended, three-and-twenty vans carried away the furniture of the three-and-twenty tenants. Everybody left. From foundations to garret, the house lay empty of lodgers. . . .

And now on the Rue de la Victoire stands the abandoned house, “The Accursed House,” whose history I have told you. Dust thickens upon the closed slats, grass grows in the court. No tenant ever presents himself now; and in the quarter, where stands this Accursed House, so funereal is its reputation that even the neighboring houses on either side of it
105 have also depreciated in value.

Lower one’s rents!! Who would think of such a thing!!!

—Emile Gaboriau

excerpted from “The Accursed House”

Famous Stories, June 1937

Review of Reviews Corporation

⁹mansard floors — top story

¹⁰disquietude — uneasiness

¹¹rout — retreat

- 1 Lines 8 through 11 reveal the
- (1) tenants' pride in the vicomte's noble heritage
 - (2) tenants' appreciation of the vicomte's good fortune
 - (3) vicomte's respect for his uncle's wishes
 - (4) vicomte's motivation for his novel decision
- 2 The similes in lines 16 and 28 emphasize Bernard's
- (1) shock at the vicomte's ideas
 - (2) exhaustion from his duties
 - (3) impatience with the tenants
 - (4) disregard of the vicomte's demand
- 3 Which statement indicates that Bernard feels the vicomte may have acted impulsively?
- (1) "But he quickly recovered himself; he had heard badly" (lines 16 and 17)
 - (2) " 'Monsieur, of course means to raise the rents' " (line 19)
 - (3) " 'Monsieur has not reflected,' persisted he" (line 24)
 - (4) "One would not conduct himself thus without being forced" (line 51)
- 4 A central idea reflected in lines 32 through 41 is that people
- (1) are easily satisfied
 - (2) are suspicious of change
 - (3) accept gifts graciously
 - (4) reveal secrets of others
- 5 The repetition of the statement in lines 54 and 81 reinforces a shift from
- (1) discomfort to comfort
 - (2) complaint to praise
 - (3) fear to trust
 - (4) uncertainty to certainty
- 6 As used in line 60, the word "hazard" most likely means to
- (1) suggest that
 - (2) rule out that
 - (3) ignore that
 - (4) require proof that
- 7 Lines 61 through 74 reveal that the tenants are
- (1) making excuses for the vicomte's rude behavior
 - (2) imagining reasons why the vicomte lowered the rents
 - (3) investigating the history of the building
 - (4) accusing one another of crimes
- 8 As used in line 85, the phrase "general rout" indicates that the tenants are
- (1) seeking revenge
 - (2) being frugal
 - (3) acting irrationally
 - (4) being responsible
- 9 Which statement reflects a conclusion based on the text?
- (1) Poor communication can generate hysterical behavior.
 - (2) Clear communication facilitates mutual benefits.
 - (3) Good intentions can create positive effects.
 - (4) Negative experiences foster group hostility.
- 10 Which quotation best reflects a central idea in the passage?
- (1) "He learned, also, that the unfurnished building, bought in 1849 for 300,000 francs, now brought in, clear of taxes, rentals of 82,000 francs a year." (lines 5 through 7)
 - (2) "With this excellent purpose in view, the Vicomte de B— sent immediately for the *concièrge* of the building, who presented himself as promptly, with back bent like a bow." (lines 12 and 13)
 - (3) "Staggering like a drunken man, Monsieur Bernard went out from the house of his proprietor." (lines 28 and 29)
 - (4) " 'What motives,' said they all, 'actuate this strange man? For certainly he must have grave reasons for a step like this!' " (lines 48 and 49)

Reading Comprehension Passage B

The Sound of Snow

Snow falls in the dusk of Connecticut. The stranger
Looks up to the glutenous sky, and it is remembrance
That tickles the end of his nose like the fingertips
Of a child and remembrance that touches the end of his
5 Tongue with the antique purity and coolness of the snow,
As if this were almost the beginning, the first snowstorm
Fluttering between his house and the serious hemlocks.¹

And best of all is the sound of snow in the stillness,
A susurrations,² the minute percussion of settling flakes;
10 And the stranger listens, intent to the whispering snow
In the fir boughs, earth's most intimate confiding,
And he thinks that this is the time of sweet cognizance³
As it was once when the house, graying in old dusk,
Knew him and sang to him, before the house forgot.

15 In the last moments of day the earth and the sky
Close in the veils of snow that flutter around him,
Shutting him in the sphere of the storm, where he stands
In his elephantine galoshes,⁴ peering this way and that
At the trees in their aloofness and the nameless house
20 Vanishing into the dark; and he stamps his feet urgently,
Turning as if in anger away from an evil companion.

Yet when, like a warning just at the fall of darkness,
Yellow light cries from the window above in the house,
From the boy's room, from the old sixteen-paned window,
25 The stranger remembers the boy who sits in the light
And turns the glass sphere, watching to see the snowstorm
Whirling inside. And the stranger shivers and listens
To the tranquil and lucid⁵ whispering of the snow.

—Hayden Carruth
“The Sound of Snow”

from *Collected Shorter Poems 1946–1991*, 1992
Copper Canyon Press

¹hemlocks — evergreen trees

²susurrations — murmuring

³cognizance — awareness

⁴galoshes — rubber boots

⁵lucid — clear

- 11 In the first stanza, the stranger is vividly reminded of the
- (1) power he felt during snowstorms in Connecticut
 - (2) enjoyment he found playing in fresh snow as a child
 - (3) relief he found in the winter snow in Connecticut
 - (4) sensations he experienced during snowfall as a child
- 12 In the context of the poem, the personification in lines 13 and 14 serves to
- (1) establish the stranger’s connection with the house
 - (2) transform the stranger’s feelings about the house
 - (3) illustrate the stranger’s dim memory of the house
 - (4) reveal the stranger’s obscured view of the house
- 13 The references to “the sphere of the storm” (line 17) and “the glass sphere” (line 26) create a link between the stranger’s
- (1) health and illness
 - (2) acceptance and rejection
 - (3) present and past
 - (4) insight and confusion
- 14 Lines 15 through 21 signal the stranger’s
- (1) changing attitude towards the storm
 - (2) increasing confidence about finding his way
 - (3) developing sense of control over the storm
 - (4) growing disinterest in continuing his journey
-

Reading Comprehension Passage C

Crikey!

This excerpt from an article presents information regarding Australian saltwater crocodiles.

...Bindi and Robert are the offspring of Steve Irwin, the boisterous, can-do naturalist of “Crocodile Hunter” fame. Perpetually clad in khaki shorts and hiking boots, the elder Irwin’s shtick¹—provocative,² up-close interactions with wild animals and squeals of wonderment (“Crikey!”) at their magnificent deadliness—made him an international TV phenomenon. Irwin’s encounters with lethal animals ended in 2006, when a stingray’s barb pierced his heart while he was filming on the Great Barrier Reef. He was 44. ...



What’s perhaps surprising is that Irwin, though controversial for his flamboyant hands-on approach to wildlife, quietly teamed with serious scientists and conservationists to make a genuine contribution to the systematic natural history of this enigmatic³ critter [the saltwater crocodile]. Their discoveries about the salties’ habits, homing abilities and private lives have prompted a rethink of how they live and how we can coexist with them. Adult crocs have no natural predators except people, possibly because we’re meaner. ...

The research project that Irwin helped launch is led by Craig Franklin, a University of Queensland [Australia] zoologist, who, using capture techniques developed by the Croc Hunter, has trapped, tagged and released scores of salties in Aussie waterways. Data gathered by satellite and acoustic telemetry is beamed to a Brisbane lab, which maps the beasts’ whereabouts and logs their dive times and depths. The project is bankrolled by the Irwins’ zoo, federal grants and private donors—a little over \$6,000 gets you the “exclusive naming rights” to a wild, caught croc.

Far from being just sedentary, solitary animals with one dominant male defending a set territory, as once thought, salties also turn out to be far-ranging creatures with complex social hierarchies. “Crocodiles are misunderstood because they’re not cute and fluffy,” says Bindi, a mainstay of Franklin’s annual field trips since Day 1. ...

Aboriginal people have traditionally hunted crocodiles for their meat, but the animal’s population remained stable until World War II ended and high-powered rifles became widely available. Commercial hunters and trigger-happy sportsmen slaughtered them indiscriminately. Since given protection in Australia during the early 1970s, their numbers have rebounded, then boomed to about 100,000.

¹shtick — style of performance

²provocative — exciting

³enigmatic — puzzling

30 Of the 23 crocodilian species, two inhabit the rivers, billabongs⁴ and mangrove swamps
of the Australian tropics: the freshwater, or Johnson’s, crocodile, which is relatively
harmless, and the formidable estuarine, or saltwater, croc, which can grow to 20 feet in
length and weigh more than a ton. The range of the two overlaps somewhat, and sometimes
the bigger and far more aggressive saltie will make a hearty lunch of the freshie.

35 Robert Irwin got it right: Salties are ruthlessly efficient killing machines. They come
equipped with nearly 70 interlocking teeth, many as sharp as a steak knife. If one breaks off,
there’s another underneath to replace it. Numerous muscles close the brute’s jaws but only
a few open them.

Over the last 70 million years not much has changed in the saltie’s evolutionary design.
This archosaurian behemoth⁵ can see well by day and by night and has three pairs of
40 eyelids, one of which functions like swimming goggles to protect the croc’s vision
underwater. Another membrane holds the tongue in place, preventing water from filling the
lungs, which is why, even in contempt, the crocodile can’t stick it out.

Salties stalk their quarry⁶ with deadly patience—over days if necessary—learning its
habits and feeding times. The croc skulks below the surface near the water’s edge, poised
45 to ambush anything it can clamp those jaws on—cattle, wild boar, kangaroos, even other
crocodiles as they come to drink. In a constant state of awareness, they’ll reveal themselves
and strike only when confident of success. . . .

If a crocodile needs to sink in a hurry, it can move its larger internal organs to the back
of its body, like a submarine shifting ballast.⁷ Franklin and [colleague, Michael] Axelsson
50 proposed that the cogged-teeth valves allow crocs to ration oxygen underwater and stay
submerged for hours.

In 2004, Franklin and Irwin joined forces with Australia’s parks and wildlife department
to launch Crocs in Space, the first published satellite-tracking study of wild crocodiles.
Dozens of adult salties were seized, restrained and outfitted with satellite transmitters to
55 keep tabs on them.

Over the years, researchers have determined that saltwater crocs can hold their breath
for nearly seven hours and dive to 23 feet; that they’re capable of walking miles overland
between waterholes; that nesting mothers check out potential nests weeks before laying
eggs; that dominant males maximize reproductive success, while subordinate males roam
60 hundreds of miles of waterway, possibly in search of unguarded females.

“To me,” says Bindi, “their nomadic behavior is so, so fascinating.”

Salties, she notes, invest considerable parental care in the rearing of their young.
The female digs them out of the nest when they start chirping and gently rolls the eggs in
her mouth to assist hatching. Gingerly, if not tenderly, she carries her darlings to the water’s
65 edge and remains at their side for several months. “Adorable!” Bindi says. What she loves
most about the research study is that you can track a crocodile for ten years, and “learn all
its secrets.” Some are caught and recaptured and recaptured again. “It’s kind of like seeing an
old friend. You become attached to an individual and watch it grow and observe all its
changes. It becomes part of your family. Imagine that: a dinosaur in your family! This is our
70 purpose—catching prehistoric creatures and learning to share what we’ve learned with the
world. And maybe, just maybe, someone listens and thinks, ‘Dinosaurs are extinct! These
guys are so precious.’” . . .

⁴billabongs — lakes or isolated ponds

⁵archosaurian behemoth — a huge descendant of dinosaurs

⁶quarry — prey

⁷ballast — weights used to balance a ship

Herpetologists⁸ had long wondered how salties—notoriously poor long-distance swimmers—have inhabited so many South Pacific islands separated by wide expanses of ocean. But data gathered by Franklin and others revealed that during long voyages, the crocs ride surface currents, like surfers catching waves or migratory birds using thermal columns. In contrast, on jaunts of 6.2 miles or less the crocs under observation were just as likely to travel with or against the flow. ...

Salties’ uncanny ability to find their way home after being relocated, which Franklin and coworkers have documented in several studies, remains something of a mystery. Perhaps, Franklin speculates, “they swim around when released and realign themselves in their environment by celestial navigation or geomagnetic cues.”

Such findings proved significant because moving salties from one place to another, a practice known as translocation, has been used in Queensland to manage potential safety risks posed by the animals. “Our experiment showed that translocation was ineffective and extremely dangerous,” Franklin says. Residents and tourists got a false sense that the waters were crocodile-free. The government abandoned its program in 2011. ...

“It’s up to us to learn to live with crocs,” she [Bindi] says. “After all, they were here first.”

—Franz Lidz
excerpted and adapted from “Crikey!”
Smithsonian, March 2015

⁸herpetologists — scientists who study reptiles and amphibians

15 Lines 1 through 12 reveal that Steve Irwin sought to

- (1) manage wild animal living areas
- (2) educate the public about wild animals
- (3) protect the public from wild animals
- (4) control wild animal predatory behaviors

16 Steve Irwin was able to use his television fame to

- (1) initiate crocodile research projects
- (2) purchase crocodiles for zoos
- (3) develop crocodile breeding techniques
- (4) fund crocodile hunting preserves

17 As used in line 20, the word “sedentary” most nearly means

- (1) living in large groups
- (2) remaining in one location
- (3) easy to aggravate
- (4) hard to capture

18 Which lines best support the idea that some crocodiles “are ruthlessly efficient killing machines” (line 34)?

- (1) “the formidable estuarine, or saltwater, croc, which can grow to 20 feet in length and weigh more than a ton” (lines 31 and 32)
- (2) “Another membrane holds the tongue in place, preventing water from filling the lungs” (lines 41 and 42)
- (3) “The croc skulks below the surface near the water’s edge, poised to ambush anything it can clamp those jaws on” (lines 44 and 45)
- (4) “it can move its larger internal organs to the back of its body” (lines 48 and 49)

19 Lines 43 through 47 emphasize crocodiles’

- (1) impulsive search for prey
- (2) limited selection of prey
- (3) techniques for hunting prey
- (4) methods for frightening prey

- 20 The implementation of “Crocs in Space” (line 53) is important to crocodile research because it
- (1) supports relocation efforts by predicting crocodile migratory paths
 - (2) provides video and sound feedback of crocodile social interactions
 - (3) is responsible for protecting researchers who study crocodile habitats
 - (4) is capable of tracking and recording crocodile movements for several years
- 21 As used in line 64, “Gingerly” most nearly means
- (1) quickly
 - (2) eagerly
 - (3) cautiously
 - (4) separately
- 22 The description of crocodile behavior in lines 56 through 68 contributes to a central idea by emphasizing the
- (1) responsibilities males share in raising their young
 - (2) care females show in nurturing their young
 - (3) subordinate role played by females
 - (4) courtship rituals employed by males
- 23 Lines 79 through 87 reveal that the practice of translocation in Queensland was ultimately
- (1) unsuccessful
 - (2) practical
 - (3) popular
 - (4) uneconomical
- 24 Which statement best expresses a central idea of the text?
- (1) “Aboriginal people have traditionally hunted crocodiles for their meat” (line 24)
 - (2) “Of the 23 crocodilian species, two inhabit the rivers, billabongs and mangrove swamps of the Australian tropics” (lines 29 and 30)
 - (3) “And maybe, just maybe, someone listens and thinks, ‘Dinosaurs are extinct! These guys are so precious’ ” (lines 71 and 72)
 - (4) “Residents and tourists got a false sense that the waters were crocodile-free” (lines 86 and 87)

Part 2

Argument

Directions: Closely read each of the *four* texts provided on pages 13 through 20 and write a source-based argument on the topic below. You may use the margins to take notes as you read and scrap paper to plan your response. Write your argument beginning on page 1 of your essay booklet.

Topic: Should English curriculum focus on the classics?

Your Task: Carefully read each of the *four* texts provided. Then, using evidence from at least *three* of the texts, write a well-developed argument regarding whether or not English curriculum should focus on the classics. Clearly establish your claim, distinguish your claim from alternate or opposing claims, and use specific, relevant, and sufficient evidence from at least *three* of the texts to develop your argument. Do *not* simply summarize each text.

Guidelines:

Be sure to:

- Establish your claim regarding whether or not English curriculum should focus on the classics
- Distinguish your claim from alternate or opposing claims
- Use specific, relevant, and sufficient evidence from at least *three* of the texts to develop your argument
- Identify each source that you reference by text number and line number(s) or graphic (for example: Text 1, line 4 or Text 2, graphic)
- Organize your ideas in a cohesive and coherent manner
- Maintain a formal style of writing
- Follow the conventions of standard written English

Texts:

Text 1 – The Reading Wars: Choice vs. Canon

Text 2 – Why Kids and Teens Need Diverse Books and Our Recommended Reads

Text 3 – Classic Works of Literature Still Have a Place in Today’s Classrooms

Text 4 – Giving High School Students the Tools to Question Classic Literature

Text 1

The Reading Wars: Choice vs. Canon¹

The day I arrive for the school-wide “Read-In” this past spring, teenagers and books are covering every available surface in Jarred Amato’s English classroom at Maplewood High School in Nashville, Tennessee—flung across lived-in couches, desks, and chairs. But there’s not a book one might traditionally identify as a “classic” in sight, and that’s by design.

5 In the middle of the room, a group of girls are cracking open the third installment of *March*, the graphic novel by Rep. [Representative] John Lewis and Andrew Aydin about the civil rights movement, when a student pushes his way through. “Hey, get out of my way,” he says playfully to the girls, grabbing a copy off the top of the stack. “I’ve wanted to read *March*!”

10 Things weren’t always this way. Four years ago, when Amato arrived at Maplewood High, he assigned his freshmen *Lord of the Flies*—a staple of high school lit [literature] classes for more than 50 years—but he couldn’t get students to read the book. “It’s a classic for some reason, but I don’t know what that reason is. Because it’s not good,” says Calvin, a graduating senior, who laughed when I asked if he finished it.

15 Frustrated, Amato surveyed students about their reading preferences and found that most didn’t know: They almost never read outside of school and generally had negative attitudes about reading. Many students felt like the books they were assigned at school didn’t reflect their experiences, and featured characters who didn’t look, think, or talk like them.

20 The issue of a disconnect between young readers and the books they’re assigned isn’t new, though. Like previous generations, American middle and high school students have continued to spend English class reading from a similar and familiar list from the English and American literature canon: Steinbeck, Dickens, Fitzgerald, Alcott, and, of course, Shakespeare.

25 But now, as social attitudes and population demographics² have shifted, teachers across the country are saying that the disconnect between the canon and its intended audience has become an epidemic, driven by rapid changes in the composition of American schools and the emergence of always-on digital platforms that vie for kids’ attention. By middle and high school, teachers concede, many of today’s students simply aren’t reading at all. . . .

30 To Amato and a growing number of teachers, the solution has been to move away from classics in English class and instead let students choose the books they read, while encouraging literature that is more reflective of the demographics and experiences of students in America’s classrooms. In teacher training programs, in professional publications, and throughout social media, choice reading has become a refrain that can sometimes sound like dogma,³ and for some it has become a call for advocacy.⁴

35 But while the student choice reading movement is growing, it is by no means universally accepted or supported in all classrooms. Other educators have warily pushed back on the approach, worrying that too much student choice is putting young adult (YA) and graphic novels—not highly regarded and vetted⁵ literature—at the center of the English literature curriculum. While not all books are enjoyable (or easy) to read, challenging books help boost

¹canon — a collection of writings considered to be the most important or influential

²population demographics — characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status

³dogma — accepted beliefs

⁴advocacy — support

⁵vetted — critically examined

40 students’ comprehension and reading proficiency, they argue, and force them to grapple⁶
with difficult, timeless questions about love, life and death, and societal dynamics. ...

Doug Lemov, an educator and managing director of the Uncommon Schools charter
network, tells me a story of visiting a special school for elite soccer athletes a few years ago.
Looking around the room, he noticed that many students in their choice-based English
45 classes had selected books about soccer. “They should not be reading books about soccer. All
they know is soccer,” says Lemov, who, along with coauthors Colleen Driggs and Erica
Woolway, has written *Reading Reconsidered*, a book that pushes back on choice reading.

Lemov believes that student choice reading has been overhyped by schools and makes a
couple of assumptions that don’t add up: First, that adolescents know enough about books
50 to know what they like to read; and second, that there’s greater power in the freedom to “do
your own thing” rather than in developing a deep understanding of what you’re reading. ...

And though it may not foster a love of reading, the data also shows that teacher-led
explicit instruction in reading a particular text (especially in different genres), combined with
lots of reading, can reap four to eight times the payoff compared with students’ choosing
55 books and reading on their own, according to Timothy Shanahan, founding director of the
Center for Literacy at the University of Illinois at Chicago. ...

Yet while the data suggests that we are failing to interest many of today’s students in
reading, it seems that educators are starting to find some equilibrium between choice and a
regimented list of must-reads: Shakespeare can exist in class alongside books kids want to
60 read. ...

—Holly Korbey
excerpted and adapted from “The Reading Wars: Choice vs. Canon”
www.edutopia.org, July 9, 2019

⁶grapple — struggle

Text 2

Why Kids and Teens Need Diverse Books and Our Recommended Reads

Think back to your middle or high school English class and the books you read. *Great Gatsby*? *Lord of the Flies*? Maybe *1984* or *Les Misérables*? While those are all important works, the literary canon has long been dominated by white authors, white perspectives, white characters — and those voices are often male. There are so many other voices we need to hear from. ...

Diversity and engagement...

Instead of perpetuating the idea that so-called “classics” are the *only* literature belonging in classrooms — and steadily distancing our modern students from the joys of literature — isn’t it time we ensure that the fiction we teach matches the world in which we live? In the last decade, the young adult and children’s markets have noticeably expanded their offerings of diverse authors, characters, and stories. ...

It’s logical to argue that students would be more engaged if they saw themselves represented in literature. After all, what is literature but a mirror of human experience? Reading the classics is wonderful, but solely providing stories about unrecognizable characters in time periods long past restricts the interconnection and inspiration our young people can and should feel from reading.

“It’s important that more books by authors of color featuring diverse characters make it into schools because all students (no matter their race, ethnicity, or sexual background) should be able to relate to the characters in novels and see that their culture is being represented in literature,” says Tiffany Brownlee, author of *Wrong in All the Right Ways*, a modern YA retelling of Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*. “As a teacher, I always try to look for ways to include novels by authors of color in my curriculum to expose my students to different lifestyles and cultures that they wouldn’t normally be exposed to. And you’d be surprised at how high the level of engagement can rise when a student’s race or culture is being taught in class. Let me just say, it soars!”

“Reading engagement is the foundation for building successful readers and a strong literacy environment,” says Carrie Kondor, EdD, Associate Professor and Reading Endorsement Chair at Concordia University-Portland. “Diverse books are an essential component of increasing reading achievement for all students because of engagement. As humans, we seek out and enjoy connections. Students must have the opportunity to engage in texts that relate to their experiences, their cultures, and their interests.”

Empathy¹ and representation

Studies have shown that reading fiction builds empathy. A 2013 study in the American Psychological Association’s journal *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts* discovered that when readers visualize scenes while reading stories, there is an actual and measurable surge of empathy. Imagine then the impact if schools were full of diverse books — providing a literary peek into the lives of not only students themselves but of those around them. ...

Relevant stories for teens

In the throes² of adolescence, literature can deeply impact one’s emotional development and the way you see the world. “I think teen readers of realistic fiction want to read books where what is going on in the world is reflected back to them,” says Renée Watson, author

¹empathy — an understanding of others’ feelings and experiences

²throes — struggle

40 of numerous books including *Piecing Me Together*, which received a Coretta Scott King
Award and a Newbery Honor. “As an author, I want to create work that helps young people
face and cope with reality, not escape it. I believe books that center around children who are
often underrepresented in literature affirms their experiences and whispers to them, ‘*You are
not alone, your story matters.*’”

45 In an era of technological devices and near-constant stimulation, diversity in literature
may be a pathway toward keeping literature relevant. “Relatable topics and topics of personal
interest get teens to put down their phones and pick up a book. Anything that appeals to
their personal lives and interests (romantic/friend-based/familial relationships/fantastical
worlds/the LGBTQ community/etc.) makes a teen want to read,” says author Tiffany
50 Brownlee. “When the teen can relate to what they’re reading through the characters (with
an emphasis on characters with diverse backgrounds), settings, or topics discussed in the
book, it suddenly becomes so much more engaging for them. They get more out of a text
when their diverse backgrounds are represented, and that’s what’s important. Not just getting
them to read, but getting them to take something away from that experience, too.”

—The Room 241 Team
excerpted from “Why Kids and Teens Need Diverse Books and Our
Recommended Reads”
<https://education.cu-portland.edu>, September 8, 2018

Text 3

Classic Works of Literature Still Have a Place in Today’s Classrooms

When introducing literature to a new class I ask two questions: “Why do we study it and what can we learn from it?” Now, if you’re a teacher you’ll know that it’s not always a smooth ride to the final destination, which is all part of the fun, but the answer we usually get to, albeit with teacher sat-nav [satellite-navigation] switched on, is that through literature, we can visit cultures impossible for us to experience ourselves. From our reading, we can begin to understand what it must have been like to live in a particular time, under certain conditions, in different parts of the world. But the best bit is that we can do all this while honing¹ those oh-so-necessary and desired critical-thinking skills.

And that’s the point: that the study of literature in the contemporary classroom is, perhaps, even more relevant today than it has ever been. So, back in September when the Secret Teacher [a teacher blog] posted that the Alan Bennett monologue A Cream Cracker under the Settee [a literary work] was to be replaced in the curriculum by an episode of Waterloo Road [a British television series], it’s not unimaginable that English teachers stood poised, quills aloft, ready to defend the body of work that has shaped the modern world, to the death. Well, to the staffroom and the discussion forums at least. . . .

From the linguistic² perspective, studying classic literature from the Western canon (Shakespeare, Dickens, Orwell and so on) affords students of English the opportunity to understand, analyse, and evaluate language quite different from their own. Structures, trends in punctuation and in the way we speak have evolved through the ages and being aware of these developments really helps us to understand better, language in its current context.

If we didn’t read and study texts from the past, and only looked to the best seller list, how would we know of this evolution? In my experience, pupils’ creativity runs rampant³ when they can remix particular structures and styles with their own writing to lend authenticity to character, story, and setting.

One of the challenges teachers face is the need to edge learners beyond their comfort zones but in doing so, we challenge their thinking and we bolster their confidence to become even more skilled in the use of their own language. Or as the CBI (Confederation of British Industry) might say, we’re equipping them with essential skills for the real world.

There are more benefits to the study of literature. Understanding a story through the experiences of a character enables us to feel what it could have been like and helps us consider the impact of events, significant or otherwise, on ordinary people. Gaining a broad view of society, through the eyes of another, fosters understanding, tolerance and empathy⁴ and the value of these capacities cannot be underestimated in today’s world.

Understanding the past does, we hope, prevent us from repeating the mistakes of our predecessors but, more than that, it helps us appreciate how attitudes have changed over time. This, in turn, promotes a deeper understanding of why we are who we are today.

While we must safeguard the teaching of classic literature or risk depriving our young people of the wealth of knowledge, enjoyment and sense of heritage and history to be gained from our classics, we should also be open to the idea that more contemporary texts, of varying titles and formats, have a justifiable place in the curriculum too.

¹ honing — perfecting

² linguistic — the study of language

³ rampant — wild

⁴ empathy — an understanding of others’ feelings and experiences

45 Any text, if taught well, will engage on some level or another. A few years ago I received a thank you card from a student at the end of her school career but it didn't convey the usual gratitude for helping her complete the course, or for getting her through the exam. It simply read: "Thank you for introducing me to beautiful literature – I have learned so much from it." And that golden moment is enough to convince me that great literature, from any time, is something that all our young people should be entitled to. That's the point.

—Sally Law

excerpted and adapted from "Classic Works of Literature Still Have a Place in Today's Classrooms"
www.theguardian.com, December 11, 2012

Text 4

Giving High School Students the Tools to Question Classic Literature

Generations of students have read Shakespeare and Hemingway for high school literature class and Jeanne Dyches, assistant professor in Iowa State University’s School of Education, would like students to question that tradition.

5 “As a field, we need to think about how our disciplines are advancing certain stories, silencing certain stories and socializing our students to think that what we’re teaching them is neutral,” Dyches said. “We need to have a conversation around why certain texts are taught year after year.”

10 The titles often at the top of high school reading lists are considered “classics” or required for “cultural literacy,” she said. However, the authors — typically white European men — do not reflect the diversity of students in the classroom. Dyches says assigning these texts without questioning issues of race or gender may exclude students who do not see themselves in the text, and make them feel their voices are not valued. This lack of questioning also normalizes the experiences of students who belong to dominant groups.

15 That is why Dyches encourages educators to consider the ideology ingrained¹ in the texts they assign, and give students the tools to question what they are reading. For a new paper, published by *Harvard Educational Review*, Dyches spent time in a high school literature class teaching students to critically examine and question the discipline of English language arts. ...

20 Her research found the lessons sharpened students’ awareness and recognition of messages of power and oppression within classic literature. By the end of the study, 77 percent of students — a 27 percent increase — recognized the politicized nature of teaching these traditional texts. Dyches says while most students were uncomfortable talking about oppression and injustice in a specific text, students of color demonstrated more awareness of these issues.

25 “We all have different experiences and reactions when we’re having conversations that challenge us to question and consider race, gender, and sexuality and all the messy intersections,” Dyches said. “It’s OK for students who have never heard these things to still be grappling with their own racial understanding and social-cultural identity. But we must still create opportunities for students to learn, wrestle with and apply new critical lenses to their educational experiences and the world around them.”

Bland, yet timeless

35 Dyches surveyed students at the beginning and end of the study to understand their perceptions and relationships with the texts they were reading in literature class. In their responses, students described the texts as “bland and ineffective,” adding that they “can’t relate to any of it,” yet they still considered the titles to be “timeless” and important “to improve upon their reading and writing skills.” Dyches said students read the texts because they believed doing so would prepare them for college.

40 Their responses illustrate a commonly held belief about the “value” of classic literature, which is based more on tradition than literary standards, Dyches said. The problem is students and educators alike do not think to question why this is the case. In fact, Dyches says until she started researching social justice issues, she was unaware of the historical perspectives and ideologies she promoted through the texts she assigned.

¹ingrained — firmly established

Not only does she want to empower students to question what they're reading in class, Dyches also wants teachers to recognize the political context of their decisions. Educators, like all people, have different biases or beliefs, Dyches said. However, if teachers know this
45 and address those biases in the classroom, she says that is a step in the right direction.

"We're all political beings and whether you recognize it or not, you're always teaching from your belief systems. It's essential to recognize and understand how our ideas or beliefs influence our teaching. I would argue you're being just as political when you assign 'Macbeth' as when you assign 'The Hate U Give,'" Dyches said. ...

—Iowa State University

excerpted from "Giving High School Students the Tools to Question Classic Literature"

www.sciencedaily.com, January 29, 2019

Part 3

Text-Analysis Response

Your Task: Closely read the text provided on pages 22 and 23 and write a well-developed, text-based response of two to three paragraphs. In your response, identify a central idea in the text and analyze how the author’s use of **one** writing strategy (literary element or literary technique or rhetorical device) develops this central idea. Use strong and thorough evidence from the text to support your analysis. Do *not* simply summarize the text. You may use the margins to take notes as you read and scrap paper to plan your response. Write your response in the spaces provided on pages 7 through 9 of your essay booklet.

Guidelines:

Be sure to:

- Identify a central idea in the text
- Analyze how the author’s use of **one** writing strategy (literary element or literary technique or rhetorical device) develops this central idea. Examples include: characterization, conflict, denotation/connotation, metaphor, simile, irony, language use, point-of-view, setting, structure, symbolism, theme, tone, etc.
- Use strong and thorough evidence from the text to support your analysis
- Organize your ideas in a cohesive and coherent manner
- Maintain a formal style of writing
- Follow the conventions of standard written English

Why Do We Fly?

...During the five or ten minutes I had watched the herd of game spread like a barbaric invasion across the plain, I had unconsciously observed, almost in their midst, a pool of water bright as a splinter from a glazier's¹ table. ...

5 Like the date palm on the Russian steppes, this crystal pool in the arid roughness of the Serengetti was not only incongruous, it was impossible. And yet, without the slightest hesitation, I flew over it and beyond it until it was gone from sight and from my thoughts.

10 There is no twilight in East Africa. Night tramps on the heels of Day with little gallantry and takes the place she lately held, in severe and humourless silence. Sounds of the things that live in the sun are quickly gone — and with them the sounds of roving aeroplanes, if their pilots have learned the lessons there are to learn about night weather, distances that seem never to shrink, and the perfidy² of landing fields that look like aerodromes by day, but vanish in darkness.

15 I watched small shadows creep from the rocks and saw birds in black flocks homeward bound to the scattered bush, and I began to consider my own home and a hot bath and food. Hope always persists beyond reason, and it seemed futile to nurse any longer the expectation of finding Woody with so much of the afternoon already gone. If he were not dead, he would of course light fires by night, but already my fuel was low, I had no emergency rations — and no sleep.

20 I had touched my starboard rudder, altering my course east for Nairobi, when the thought first struck me that the shining bit of water I had so calmly flown over was not water at all, but the silvered wings of a Klemm monoplane bright and motionless in the path of the slanting sun. ...

25 But before considering any of this, I had already reversed my direction, lost altitude, and opened the throttle again. It was a race with racing shadows, a friendly trial between the sun and me.

30 As I flew, my hunch became conviction. Nothing in the world, I thought, could have looked so much like reflecting water as the wings of Woody's plane. I remembered how bright those wings had been when last I saw them, freshly painted to shine like silver or stainless steel. Yet they were only of flimsy wood and cloth and hardened glue.

35 The deception had amused Woody. 'All metal,' he would say, jerking a thumb toward the Klemm; 'all metal, except just the wings and fuselage³ and prop and little things like that. Everything else is metal — even the engine.'

Even the engine! — as much of a joke to us as to the arrant winds of Equatorial Africa; a toy engine with bustling manner and frantic voice; an hysterical engine, guilty at last perhaps of what, in spite of Woody's jokes and our own, we all had feared.

35 Now almost certainly guilty, I thought, for there at last was what I hunted — not an incredible pool of water, but, unmistakable this time, the Klemm huddled to earth like a shot bird, not crushed, but lifeless and alone, beside it no fire, not even a stick with a fluttering rag. ...

40 I throttled down, allowing just enough revs to prevent the ship from stalling at the slow speed required to land in so small a space. Flattening out and swinging the tail from side to side in order to get what limited vision I could at the ground below and directly ahead, I flew in gently and brought the Avian to earth in a surprisingly smooth run. I made a

¹glazier's — glass cutter's

²perfidy — betrayal

³fuselage — body of the plane

45 mental note at the time that the take-off, especially if Woody were aboard, might be a good deal more difficult.

But there was no Woody.

I climbed out, got my dusty and dented water bottle from the locker, and walked over to the Klemm, motionless and still glittering in the late light. I stood in front of her wings and saw no sign of mishap, and heard nothing. There she rested, frail and feminine, against
50 the rough, grey ground, her pretty wings unmarked, her propeller rakishly tilted, her cockpit empty. ...

I found a path with the grass bent down and little stones scuffed from their hollows, and I followed it past some larger stones into a tangle of thorn trees. I shouted for Woody and got nothing but my own voice for an answer, but when I turned my head to shout again,
55 I saw two boulders leaning together, and in the cleft they made were a pair of legs clothed in grimy work slacks and, beyond the legs, the rest of Woody, face down with his head in the crook of his arm.

I went over to where he was, unscrewed the cap of the water bottle and leaned down and shook him. ...

60 Woody began to back out of the cleft of the rocks with a motion irrelevantly reminiscent⁴ of the delectable crayfish of the South of France. He was mumbling, and I recalled that men dying of thirst are likely to mumble and that what they want is water. I poured a few drops on the back of his neck as it appeared and got, for my pains, a startled grunt. It was followed by a few of those exquisite words common to the vocabularies of
65 sailors, airplane pilots, and stevedores — and then abruptly Woody was sitting upright on the ground, his face skinny beneath a dirty beard, his lips cinder-dry and split, his eyes red-rimmed and sunk in his cheeks. He was a sick man and he was grinning. ...

‘Why do we fly?’ said Woody. ‘We could do other things. We could work in offices, or have farms, or get into the Civil Service. We could...’

70 ‘We could give up flying tomorrow. You could, anyhow. You could walk away from your plane and never put your feet on a rudder bar again. You could forget about weather and night flights and forced landings, and passengers who get airsick, and spare parts that you can’t find, and wonderful new ships that you can’t buy. You could forget all that and go off somewhere away from Africa and never look at an aerodrome again. You might be a very
75 happy man, so why don’t you?’

‘I couldn’t bear it,’ said Woody. ‘It would all be so dull.’ ...

—Beryl Markham

“Why Do We Fly?”

excerpted from *West With the Night*, 2013

North Point Press

⁴reminiscent — suggestive

