

# COMPREHENSIVE ENGLISH

The University of the State of New York

REGENTS HIGH SCHOOL EXAMINATION

## COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

IN

## ENGLISH

**Wednesday, January 27, 2016 — 1:15 to 4:15 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 four parts. Part 1 tests listening skills; you are to answer all eight multiple-choice questions. For Part 2, you are to answer all twelve multiple-choice questions. For Part 3, you are to answer all five multiple-choice questions and the two short constructed-response questions. For Part 4, you are to write one essay response. The two short constructed-response questions and the essay response should be written in pen.

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.**



## NOTES

**DO NOT TURN THIS PAGE UNTIL YOU ARE TOLD TO DO SO.**

## Part 1 (Questions 1–8)

### Multiple-Choice Questions

**Directions** (1–8): Use your notes to answer the following questions about the passage read to you. Select the best suggested answer to each question and record your answer on the separate answer sheet provided for you.

- 1 What did the speaker want to illustrate by mentioning that Old School threw away his camp stove while on the trail?
    - (1) fire is always a danger
    - (2) food odors may attract animals
    - (3) equipment must meet hiking codes
    - (4) backpacks should be manageable
  - 2 The entire Appalachian Trail runs from
    - (1) Maine to Georgia
    - (2) Florida to Maryland
    - (3) Springer Mountain to West Virginia
    - (4) Virginia to the White Mountains
  - 3 The speaker's reference to pioneers and naturalists, such as Laura Ingalls Wilder and Ralph Waldo Emerson, illustrates the idea that
    - (1) physical labor may produce fame
    - (2) silence is often the best companion
    - (3) nature has a powerful effect on people
    - (4) survival is dependent on collaboration
  - 4 Who can be credited with suggesting the idea of the Appalachian Trail?
    - (1) Earl Shaffer
    - (2) Benton MacKaye
    - (3) Daniel Boone
    - (4) Billy Mason
  - 5 According to the account, before 1948 the trail founders did *not* consider that people would eventually
    - (1) desire some shortcuts
    - (2) rename the trails
    - (3) require heavy loads
    - (4) hike the entire trail
  - 6 Why do many hikers take on a trail name?
    - (1) They want to suspend their daily lives.
    - (2) They want to protect themselves.
    - (3) They want to honor famous outdoorsmen.
    - (4) They want to make new friends.
  - 7 As used in the account, "trail magic" refers to
    - (1) odd natural occurrences
    - (2) surprise acts of kindness
    - (3) artwork by hikers
    - (4) starry night skies
  - 8 As Old School completed his through-hike, he considered his reward to be
    - (1) a reunion with his family
    - (2) the glory of winning
    - (3) a sense of accomplishment
    - (4) the beautiful view
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## Part 2 (Questions 9–20)

**Directions** (9–20): Below 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.

### Reading Comprehension Passage A

“Twenty-one piece tea set of blue lusterware ... \$2.98” was what it said alongside the picture in the Sears, Roebuck Christmas catalogue. We were overwhelmed at such value and set our sights on scaring up the three bucks and some odd cents that must be figured in for tax and postage. It was the biggest gift we’d ever tackled for Mama; up to that point we’d been satisfied with the cross-stitch on burlap or the file-card holders or the black construction-paper silhouettes that Miss Zilch or Miss Drechsler or Mrs. Smith dreamed up to motivate us between Thanksgiving and Christmas. ...

With our sister Mary’s help we filled out the form and sent it off with a money order procured from the mailman by putting a “Please blow horn” sign in the mailbox. This had to be accomplished on Saturday, when Mama was gone to market. Then the vigil began. Let’s see—two days for the order to get to Chicago, a couple of days to process it, three or four days coming back, and a Sunday in between. At the most it ought to come in nine days.

Every day we got out the catalogue and turned it to the dog-eared page where our treasure was pictured. “What do you think of that, Mama?” asked Bill, with thinly disguised braggadocio.<sup>1</sup> “Wouldn’t you just love to have something like that around here?” Our tea set was as well kept a secret as a case of mumps.<sup>2</sup>

As good luck would have it, the package arrived two weeks to the day from when we ordered. Saturday again, and Mama was at market, so we set the box on a chair and dived in with all six fists. Not a very big box for twenty-one pieces! But all the same, big enough to make quite some impression under the tree. ...

First the cream pitcher, then the sugar bowl. “The lid? ... Oh, here.” Then the wondrous teapot—shimmering blue laced with a spray of pinkish-red blossoms. To our chagrin one of the cups was a tissue-paper wad of broken pieces. Oh well, even a twenty-piece tea set was not to be sneezed at. Maybe some adjustment could be made.

We counted them all, wrapping them again in the tissue and laboriously fitting them back in the excelsior,<sup>3</sup> hastening to banish all traces before Mom got home. We wrapped the box in two or three pieces of last year’s Christmas paper, closing the stubborn flaps with Christmas seals that came “free” in the mail. We adorned it royally with old ribbon untangled from the wad, and then hid it away in Mary’s closet. ...

I don’t really remember how she reacted. I’m sure it was a convincing show. It didn’t occur to us (as I’m sure it did to her) to wonder where in our crowded cupboard she was going to put twenty pieces of china “Made in Japan.”

We used the tea set from time to time and the pieces disappeared. The cream pitcher went early in the game, then the six plates, the five cups, the saucers. The remnants moved gradually upward in the cupboard.

<sup>1</sup>braggadocio — arrogance

<sup>2</sup>mumps — contagious disease marked by fever and swelling of the face and neck

<sup>3</sup>excelsior — fine curled wood shavings used for packing fragile items

When we went through Mama's fifty-seven-year accumulation of "things," way up in the rear of the top shelf of the kitchen cupboard we unearthed the lid to a sugar bowl long gone and the blue luster teapot. Its spout was held on precariously with Scotch tape; no tea had poured from it for years. But too precious, obviously, to discard were the fragments of  
40 a Christmas memory more cherished than the gift had ever been.

—Patricia Penton Leimbach  
excerpted from "Nostalgic Rose"  
*All My Meadows*, 1977  
Prentice-Hall, Inc.

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|--|--|
| 9 The initial reaction of the children when they see the price of the tea set is one of<br>(1) disgust                      (3) disinterest<br>(2) disbelief                    (4) distaste | 12 As used in line 22, the word "chagrin" most nearly means<br>(1) confusion                    (3) distress<br>(2) pleasure                    (4) relief   |
| 10 The author uses the simile found in line 16 to emphasize the children's<br>(1) resentment                (3) excitement<br>(2) imagination               (4) frustration                  | 13 The teapot discovered years later "in the rear of the top shelf of the kitchen cupboard" (lines 36 and 37) is symbolic of Mama's<br>(1) shame                        (3) carelessness<br>(2) appreciation              (4) creativity |
| 11 The phrase "But all the same" (line 19) signals the children's<br>(1) sadness                      (3) objection<br>(2) surprise                      (4) acceptance                      | 14 The passage can best be described as<br>(1) a memoir                    (3) a satire<br>(2) an allegory                 (4) an elegy  |
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## Reading Comprehension Passage B

If there is a universal in the Falkland Islands, it is the wind. Blowing in from the Southern Ocean, born in distant Antarctica and pregnant with drizzle, it scythes across this treeless, grassy archipelago more than 300 miles off the coast of Argentina. At times it blows a furious gale against which one can barely walk; at other times it's a brisk breeze that merely  
5 rips the cap from your head. In just a couple of days I'd already grown accustomed to its endless keen and sharp edge, but what stopped me short this time was something new and baffling—the way the wind seemed to make the ground itself shimmer, like rippling water.

Looking closer, I realized the ripples were trillions of tiny feathers blanketing the ground in an even white layer and piled up in ankle-deep drifts wherever there was a gully  
10 or depression. Taking a few more steps I topped a small rise—and discovered the answer to the mystery.

Thousands of gentoo penguins—three feet tall, attired in classic penguin monochrome<sup>1</sup> but with white caps—stood around a small and shrinking pond, digging their orange beaks deep into the molting feathers of their backs and sides. The wind picked up fresh squalls of  
15 down, blowing them across the dunes and toward a nearby beach, where hundreds more penguins hurried back and forth between the colony and the ocean surf, waddling along on thick, tangerine feet. ...

Having disregarded me to this point, the gentoos suddenly decided I was the most interesting thing in the colony. Immediately scores of them started plodding my way, necks  
20 outstretched with lively curiosity, tripping over one another in their haste. They jammed around within a foot or so of me, bobbing their heads and making small, murmuring sounds; I was lying so low that I found myself looking up at them. A few pecked inquisitively at my rain pants, while one leaned down and peered into the barrel of my telephoto lens, staring,  
25 it seemed, at its reflection. They constantly shook their heads with quick, sharp snaps to dislodge the droplets of highly saline water that drip endlessly from the tips of their bills. This is how penguins void excess salt from the water they drink. But it gave me the disquieting sense of general disapproval from a crowd too polite to actually say so.

I was on Sea Lion Island, the most southerly of the more than 700 islands that make up the Falklands—a world a naturalist could spend a lifetime exploring, from craggy inland  
30 peaks and flower-spangled marshes to isolated rocky outcrops surrounded by lush kelp forests teeming with fur seals and porpoises. For a week I would hopscotch among the outer islands on the government air-taxi service (the only way to reach most of the archipelago), visiting some of the places that have made the Falklands a grail<sup>2</sup> destination of mine for decades: huge colonies where five species of penguins can be found; wetlands crowded with  
35 waterfowl few birders have even heard of; remote bays where strange raptors try to steal the hat off your head; and nature reserves where elephant seals and sea lions treat you like just another member of the herd.

All of which was marvelous, but—typical of the way that the Falklands defy all expectations—the most unforgettable moments came unexpectedly at the very end, not on  
40 some far-flung shore but on a small islet just a short boat ride from Stanley, the capital. There we stepped back into an older, wilder world—like Eden before the fall, where the maniacal laughter of thousands of birds fills the dark, and where roaring sea lions lie hidden within a jungle of grasses. The Falklands, I was quickly learning, are truly one of the most remarkable places on earth. ...

—Scott Weidensaul  
excerpted from “Land Before Time”  
*Audubon*, May-June 2013

<sup>1</sup>monochrome — black and white

<sup>2</sup>grail — object of a difficult and extended quest

- 15 The purpose of the first paragraph is to
- (1) present statistical data
  - (2) describe an environment
  - (3) introduce a scientific theory
  - (4) support a popular belief
- 16 The gentoos' behavior toward the photographer indicates they are
- (1) hostile towards intruders
  - (2) afraid of strangers
  - (3) protective of territory
  - (4) eager for interaction
- 17 As used in line 27, the word "disquieting" most nearly means
- (1) enthusiastic
  - (2) satisfying
  - (3) uncomfortable
  - (4) indifferent
- 18 The author describes the Falkland Islands as "a world a naturalist could spend a lifetime exploring" (line 29) because of the
- (1) exceptional wildlife
  - (2) challenging terrain
  - (3) seasonal weather changes
  - (4) abundant food supply
- 19 The author finds the Falkland Islands "remarkable" (line 44) because they are
- (1) unique
  - (2) profitable
  - (3) civilized
  - (4) barren
- 20 The text is developed primarily through the use of
- (1) imagery
  - (2) irony
  - (3) flashback
  - (4) allusion
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## Part 3 (Questions 21–27)

**Directions:** On the following pages read Passage I (an excerpt from a memoir) and Passage II (a poem) about private journeys. You may use the margins to take notes as you read. Answer the multiple-choice questions on the answer sheet provided for you. Then write your response for question 26 on page 1 of your essay booklet and question 27 on page 2 of your essay booklet.

### Passage I

The doors that are always open have been closed and locked. The windows are shut tight. The shades are drawn. No water runs from the faucets. The toaster—which in the best of times works only if its handle is pinned under the weight of a second, even less functional toaster—is unplugged. The kitchen cupboards are empty except for a stack of  
5 napkins, a box of sugar cubes, and eight cans of beer. The porch furniture—six white plastic chairs, two green wooden tables—has been stacked in the dining room. The croquet set, the badminton equipment, the tennis net, and the flag are behind closet doors. The dinghy<sup>1</sup> is turtled on sawhorses in the barn, the oars angled against the wall. The roasted-salt scent of August has given way to the stale smell of mothballs, ashes, mildew. ...

10 After gorging on summer for three months, the house has gone into hibernation. They call it the off-season, as if there were a switch in the cellar, next to the circuit breakers, that one flipped to plunge the house from brimming to empty, warm to cold, noisy to silent, light to dark. Outside, too, the world has changed color, from blues, yellows, and greens to grays and browns. The tangle of honeysuckle, *Rosa rugosa*, and poison ivy that lapped at  
15 the porch is a skein<sup>2</sup> of bare branches and vines. The lawn is hard as tundra,<sup>3</sup> brown as burlap. The Benedicts' house next door, hidden from view when I was last here, is visible through the leafless trees. The woods give up their secrets: old tennis balls, an errant Frisbee, a lost tube of sunblock, a badminton birdie. Out in the bay, the water is the color of steel and spattered with whitecaps; without the presence of boats to lend perspective,  
20 the waves look ominously large. On the stony beach, the boardwalk—a set of narrow planks we use to enter the water without spraining our ankles on the algae-slicked rocks—has been piled above the tide line, beyond the reach, we hope, of storms. ...

In this still house, where is the summer hiding? Perhaps in the mice whose droppings pepper the couch, the bats that brood in the attic eaves, the squirrels that nest in the stairwell  
25 walls. They are silent now, but we will hear and see them—and the offspring to which they will soon give birth—in a few months. For if the house is full of memory, it is equally full of anticipation. Dormant life lies everywhere, waiting to be picked up where it left off, like an old friendship after a long absence: that towel ready to be slung over a sweaty shoulder, that tennis ball to be thrown into the air, those chairs to be set out on the porch, that  
30 fishing lure to be cast into the bay, that guest book to be inscribed with a day in June. Even on the coldest winter morning, this house holds within it, like a voluptuous<sup>4</sup> flower within a hard seed, the promise of summer.

—George Howe Colt  
excerpted from *The Big House:  
A Century in the Life of an American Summer Home*, 2003  
Scribner

<sup>1</sup>dinghy — a small rowboat

<sup>2</sup>skein — twisted mass

<sup>3</sup>tundra — frozen plain

<sup>4</sup>voluptuous — delightful

**Passage II**  
**The Solitary Pond**

The fall we moved to the farm, I was thirteen;  
the half-wild grapes on the dilapidated arbor  
could not be eaten, and the forests and brown fields  
    also seemed to have no purpose. I grew accustomed,

5 that winter before the first spring, to hike alone,  
ducking first under our barbed wire, then our neighbor's,  
through thorny and hurricane-hit woods to a store  
selling candy and soft drink and gas by Route 11.

Returning one afternoon along an old wall,  
10 I came to a shallow, solitary pond, frozen,  
not more than fifteen feet across, and lined with stalks  
and briar-strands that left the center scarcely open.

Recalling the rink in the town we had moved from,  
I fetched my dull skates from the attic chest and  
15 blundered  
back through sharp thickets while the cold grew and a  
frown  
from the sky deepened the ominous area under

the black branches. My fingers were numb at the laces,  
20 and the ice was riddled with twigs, and my intent  
to glide back to childhood absurd. I fell, unstable  
on the clutter of wood and water bubbled and bent  
like earth itself, and thrashed home through the trees  
    hating  
25 the very scratches left by my experiment.

—John Updike  
from *Tossing and Turning*, 1977  
Alfred A. Knopf

## Multiple-Choice Questions

**Directions** (21–25): Select the best suggested answer to each question and record your answer on the separate answer sheet provided for you.

**Passage I** (the memoir excerpt) — Questions 21–23 refer to Passage I.

- 21 The narrator indicates that the house has been
- (1) abandoned by the owners
  - (2) offered for sale
  - (3) closed for the season
  - (4) damaged by fire
- 22 The narrator presents the house as a “flower within a hard seed” (lines 31 and 32) in order to emphasize its
- (1) beauty
  - (2) potential
  - (3) history
  - (4) purpose
- 23 What does the excerpt reveal about the narrator’s experience with the house?
- (1) The narrator’s previous visit to the house was in the summer or fall.
  - (2) The narrator’s childhood was spent at the house with his family.
  - (3) The narrator’s feelings about the house are filled with regret.
  - (4) The narrator’s memories of the house are unclear and vague.

**Passage II** (the poem) — Questions 24–25 refer to Passage II.

- 24 The phrase “to glide back to childhood” (line 21) indicates the narrator’s
- (1) motivation
  - (2) impatience
  - (3) tolerance
  - (4) observation
- 25 The “very scratches” (line 25) remind the narrator of his
- (1) unpleasant memories of the farm
  - (2) surprised discovery of the pond
  - (3) attempts to improve his skating skill
  - (4) failure to recapture his adolescent experience

## Short-Response Questions

**Directions** (26–27): Write your responses to question 26 on page 1 of your essay booklet and question 27 on page 2 of your essay booklet. Be sure to answer **both** questions.

26 Write a well-developed paragraph in which you use ideas from **both** Passage I (the memoir excerpt) and Passage II (the poem) to establish a controlling idea about private journeys. Develop your controlling idea using specific examples and details from **both** Passage I and Passage II.

27 Choose a specific literary element (e.g., theme, characterization, structure, point of view, etc.) or literary technique (e.g., symbolism, irony, figurative language, etc.) used by **one** of the authors. Using specific details from **either** Passage I (the memoir excerpt) **or** Passage II (the poem), in a well-developed paragraph, show how the author uses that element or technique to develop the passage.

## Part 4 (Question 28)

### 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 beginning on page 3 of the essay booklet.

### Critical Lens:

“One sickly sheep infects the flock ...”

—Isaac Watts  
“Against Evil Company”  
*Divine Songs*, 1715

### 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





