

SESSION TWO

The University of the State of New York

REGENTS HIGH SCHOOL EXAMINATION

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

IN

ENGLISH

SESSION TWO

Thursday, August 14, 2003 — 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.

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

Part A

Directions: Read the passages on the following pages (an essay 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 reaching beyond oneself as revealed in the passages. In your essay, use ideas from **both** passages to establish a controlling idea about reaching beyond oneself. 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 reaching beyond oneself
- 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

A round, green cardboard sign hangs from a string proclaiming, “We built a proud new feeling,” the slogan of a local supermarket. It is a souvenir from one of my brother’s last jobs. In addition to being a bagger, he’s worked at a fast-food restaurant, a gas station, a garage and a textile factory. Now, in the icy clutches of the
5 Northeastern winter, he is unemployed. He will soon be a father. He is 19 years old.

In mid-December I was at Stanford, among the palm trees and weighty chores of academe. And all I wanted to do was get out. I joined the rest of the undergrads in a chorus of excitement, singing the praises of Christmas break. No classes, no midterms, no finals . . . and no freshmen! (I’m a resident assistant.)
10 Awesome! I was looking forward to escaping. I never gave a thought to what I was escaping to.

Once I got home to New Jersey, reality returned. My dreaded freshmen had been replaced by unemployed relatives; badgering professors had been replaced by hard-working single mothers, and cold classrooms by dilapidated bedrooms and kitchens. The room in which the “proud new feeling” sign hung contained the belongings of myself, my mom and my brother. But for these two weeks it was mine. They slept downstairs on couches.

Most students who travel between the universes of poverty and affluence during breaks experience similar conditions, as well as the guilt, the helplessness and, sometimes, the embarrassment associated with them. Our friends are willing to listen, but most of them are unable to imagine the pain of the impoverished lives that we see every six months. Each time I return home I feel further away from the realities of poverty in America and more ashamed that they are allowed to persist. What frightens me most is not that the American socioeconomic
20 system permits poverty to continue, but that by participating in that system I share some of the blame.

Last year I lived in an on-campus apartment, with a (relatively) modern bathroom, kitchen and two bedrooms. Using summer earnings, I added some expensive prints, a potted palm and some other plants, making the place look like
30 the more-than-humble abode of a New York City Yuppie. I gave dinner parties, even a *soirée française*.¹

For my roommate, a doctor’s son, this kind of life was nothing extraordinary. But my mom was struggling to provide a life for herself and my brother. In addition to working 24-hour-a-day cases as a practical nurse, she was trying to
35 ensure that my brother would graduate from high school and have a decent life. She knew that she had to compete for his attention with drugs and other potentially dangerous things that can look attractive to a young man when he sees no better future.

Living in my grandmother’s house this Christmas break restored all the forgotten, and the never acknowledged, guilt. I had gone to boarding school on a full scholarship since the ninth grade, so being away from poverty was not new. But my own growing affluence has increased my distance. My friends say that I should not feel guilty: what could I do substantially for my family at this age, they ask. Even though I know that education is the right thing to do, I can’t help but
40 feel, sometimes, that I have it too good. There is no reason that I deserve security

¹a *soirée française* — a French party

and warmth, while my brother has to cope with potential unemployment and prejudice. I, too, encounter prejudice, but it is softened by my status as a student in an affluent and intellectual community.

50 More than my sense of guilt, my sense of helplessness increases each time I
return home. As my success leads me further away for longer periods of time,
poverty becomes harder to conceptualize and feels that much more oppressive
when I visit with it. The first night of break, I lay in our bedroom, on a couch that
55 let out into a bed that took up the whole room, except for a space heater. It was
a little hard to sleep because the springs from the couch stuck through at
inconvenient spots. But it would have been impossible to sleep anyway because
of the groans coming from my grandmother's room next door. Only in her early
60s, she suffers from many chronic diseases and couldn't help but moan, then
pray aloud, then moan, then pray aloud.

60 **Not very festive:** This wrenching of my heart was interrupted by the 3 a.m.
entry of a relative who had been allowed to stay at the house despite rowdy
behavior and threats toward the family in the past. As he came into the house, he
slammed the door, and his heavy steps shook the second floor as he stomped into
my grandmother's room to take his place, at the foot of her bed. There he slept,
65 without blankets on a bare mattress. This was the first night. Later in the vacation,
a Christmas turkey and a Christmas ham were stolen from my aunt's refrigerator
on Christmas Eve. We think the thief was a relative. My mom and I decided not
to exchange gifts that year because it just didn't seem festive.

70 A few days after New Year's I returned to California. The Northeast was soon
hit by a blizzard. They were there, and I was here. That was the way it had to be,
for now. I haven't forgotten; the ache of knowing their suffering is always there.
It has to be kept deep down, or I can't find the logic in studying and partying
while people, my people, are being killed by poverty. Ironically, success drives me
away from those I most want to help by getting an education.

75 Somewhere in the midst of all that misery, my family has built, within me, "a
proud feeling." As I travel between the two worlds it becomes harder to
remember just how proud I should be — not just because of where I have come
from and where I am going, but because of where they are. The fact that they
survive in the world in which they live is something to be very proud of, indeed.
It inspires within me a sense of tenacity and accomplishment that I hope every
80 college graduate will someday possess.

—Marcus Mabry
"Living in Two Worlds"
from *Newsweek on Campus*, April 1988

Passage II

- Life for my child is simple, and is good.
He knows his wish. Yes, but that is not all.
Because I know mine too.
And we both want joy of undeepest and unabiding¹ things,
5 Like kicking over a chair or throwing blocks out of a window
Or tipping over an ice box pan
Or snatching down curtains or fingering an electric outlet
Or a journey or a friend or an illegal kiss.
No. There is more to it than that.
10 It is that he has never been afraid.
Rather, he reaches out and lo the chair falls with a beautiful crash,
And the blocks fall, down on the people's heads,
And the water comes slooshing sloppily out across the floor.
And so forth.
15 Not that success, for him, is sure, infallible.
But never has he been afraid to reach.
His lesions² are legion.³
But reaching is his rule.

—Gwendolyn Brooks
from *Annie Allen*, 1949
Harper & Brothers

¹ unabiding – temporary

² lesions – injuries

³ legion – numerous

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 essay) — Questions 1–6 refer to Passage I.

- 1 One of the reasons that the sign in the bedroom is ironic is because the brother
 - (1) collects souvenirs
 - (2) has quit school
 - (3) is unemployed
 - (4) sleeps downstairs

- 2 The statement “badgering professors had been replaced by hard-working single mothers” (lines 13 and 14) is one example of the author’s use of
 - (1) cause and effect
 - (2) analogy
 - (3) chronological order
 - (4) comparison and contrast

- 3 The author’s description of his on-campus apartment at Stanford University as “like the more-than-humble abode of a New York City Yuppie” (lines 29 and 30) emphasizes his
 - (1) distance from his family’s situation
 - (2) contempt for city residents
 - (3) need for his family’s approval
 - (4) desire to live simply

- 4 The author admires his mother primarily for her
 - (1) cleverness
 - (2) perseverance
 - (3) knowledge
 - (4) beauty

- 5 The descriptions in lines 49 through 67 convey a sense of
 - (1) disorder and futility
 - (2) competitiveness and over-achievement
 - (3) comfort and security
 - (4) forgiveness and redemption

- 6 The author’s emotional conflict can best be described as
 - (1) anger versus joy
 - (2) guilt versus pride
 - (3) humility versus power
 - (4) fear versus security

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

- 7 The actions in lines 5 through 7 and 11 through 13 refer to
 - (1) parental wishes
 - (2) childhood pleasures
 - (3) unfulfilled dreams
 - (4) early failures

- 8 As used in line 15, the word “infallible” most nearly means
 - (1) certain
 - (2) possible
 - (3) desirable
 - (4) understandable

- 9 Line 16 indicates the child’s willingness to
 - (1) show feelings
 - (2) break rules
 - (3) take risks
 - (4) make demands

- 10 The sentence “His lesions are legion” (line 17) emphasizes the child’s many
 - (1) wishes and desires
 - (2) cuts and bruises
 - (3) fears and restraints
 - (4) strengths and skills

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:

“We do not read novels* for improvement or instruction.”
—Oliver Wendell Holmes
*The Occasional Speeches of
Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, 1962*

*For the purpose of writing your critical essay, you may interpret the word novels to include plays, short stories, poems, biographies, and books of true experience.

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. **(Remember that you may use any genre of literature including novels, plays, short stories, poems, biographies, and books of true experience.)**
- 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**

Thursday, August 14, 2003 — 8:30 to 11:30 a.m., only

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

Tear Here

Tear Here

Tear Here