

# SESSION TWO

The University of the State of New York

REGENTS HIGH SCHOOL EXAMINATION

## COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

IN

ENGLISH

SESSION TWO

**Friday, August 17, 2001 — 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 (a memoir and a poem). Write the number of the answer to each multiple-choice question on your answer sheet. Then write the essay in your essay booklet as described in **Your Task**. You may use the margins to take notes as you read and scrap paper to plan your response.

### Your Task:

After you have read the passages and answered the multiple-choice questions, write a unified essay about the experience of visiting libraries as revealed in the passages. In your essay, use ideas from **both** passages to establish a controlling idea about the experience of visiting libraries. 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 experience of visiting libraries
- 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

From the nearest library I learned every sort of suprising thing—some of it, though not much of it, from the books themselves.

The Homewood Library had graven across its enormous stone facade: FREE TO THE PEOPLE. In the evenings, neighborhood people—the men and  
5 women of Homewood—browsed in the library and brought their children. By day, the two vaulted rooms, the adults’ and children’s sections, were almost empty. The kind Homewood librarians, after a trial period, had given me a card to the adult section. This was an enormous silent room with marble floors. Nonfiction was on the left.

10 Beside the farthest wall, and under leaded windows set ten feet from the floor, so that no human being could ever see anything from them—next to the wall, and at the farthest remove from the idle librarians at their curved wooden counter, and from the oak bench where my mother waited in her camel’s-hair coat chatting with the librarians or reading—stood the last and darkest and most  
15 obscure of the tall nonfiction stacks: NATURAL HISTORY. It was here, in the cool darkness of a bottom shelf, that I found *The Field Book of Ponds and Streams*.

*The Field Book of Ponds and Streams* was a small, blue-bound book printed in fine type on thin paper. Its third chapter explained how to make sweep nets,  
20 plankton nets, glass-bottomed buckets, and killing jars. It specified how to mount slides, how to label insects on their pins, and how to set up a freshwater aquarium.

One was to go into “the field” wearing hip boots and perhaps a head net for mosquitoes. One carried in a “ruck-sack” half a dozen corked test tubes, a smattering of screwtop baby-food jars, a white enamel tray, assorted pipettes and eye-  
25 droppers, an artillery of cheesecloth nets, a notebook, a hand lens, perhaps a map, and *The Field Book of Ponds and Streams*. This field—unlike the fields I had seen, such as the field where Walter Milligan played football—was evidently very well watered, for there one could find, and distinguish among, daphniae, planaria,  
30 water pennies, stonefly larvae, dragonfly nymphs, salamander larvae, tadpoles, snakes, and turtles, all of which one could carry home.

That anyone had lived the fine life described in Chapter 3 astonished me. Although the title page indicated quite plainly that one Ann Haven Morgan had written *The Field Book of Ponds and Streams*, I nevertheless imagined, perhaps  
35 from the authority and freedom of it, that its author was a man. It would be good to write him and assure him that someone had found his book, in the dark near the marble floor at the Homewood Library. I would, in the same letter or in a subsequent one, ask him a question outside the scope of his book, which was where I personally might find a pond, or a stream. But I did not know how to  
40 address such a letter, of course, or how to learn if he was still alive.

I was afraid, too, that my letter would disappoint him by betraying my ignorance, which was just beginning to attract my own notice. What, for example, was this substance called cheesecloth, and what do scientists do with it? What, when you really got down to it, was enamel? If candy could, notoriously, “eat through  
45 enamel,” why would anyone make trays out of it? Where—short of robbing a museum—might a fifth-grade student at the Ellis School on Fifth Avenue obtain such a legendary item as a wooden bucket?

*The Field Book of Ponds and Streams* was a shocker from beginning to end. The greatest shock came at the end.

50 When you checked out a book from the Homewood Library, the librarian wrote your number on the book's card and stamped the due date on the sheet glued to the book's last page. When I checked out *The Field Book of Ponds and Streams* for the second time, I noticed the book's card. It was almost full. There were numbers on both sides. My hearty author and I were not alone in the world,  
55 after all. With us, and sharing our enthusiasm for dragonfly larvae and single-celled plants, were, apparently, many adults.

Who were these people? Had they, in Pittsburgh's Homewood section, found ponds? Had they found streams?

60 Every year, I read again *The Field Book of Ponds and Streams*. Often, when I was in the library, I simply visited it. I sat on the marble floor and studied the book's card. There we all were. There was my number. There was the number of someone else who had checked it out more than once. Might I contact this person and cheer him up?

For I assumed that, like me, he had found pickings pretty slim in Pittsburgh.

65 The people of Homewood, some of whom lived in visible poverty, on crowded streets among burned-out houses—they dreamed of ponds and streams. They were saving to buy microscopes. In their bedrooms they fashioned plankton nets. But their hopes were even more vain than mine, for I was a child, and anything might happen; they were adults, living in Homewood. There was neither pond  
70 nor stream on the streetcar routes. The Homewood residents whom I knew had little money and little free time. The marble floor was beginning to chill me. It was not fair.

—Annie Dillard

## Passage II

### Maple Valley Branch Library, 1967

For a fifteen-year-old there was plenty  
to do: browse the magazines,  
slip into the Adult section to see  
what vast *tristesse*<sup>1</sup> was born of rush-hour traffic,  
5 décolletés<sup>2</sup>, and the plague of too much money.  
There was so much to discover—how to  
lay out a road, the language of flowers,  
and the place of women in the tribe of Moost.  
There were equations elegant as a French twist,  
10 fractal geometry's unwinding maple leaf;

I could follow, step-by-step, the slow disclosure  
of a pineapple Jell-O mold—or take  
the path of Harold's purple crayon through  
the bedroom window and onto a lavender  
15 spill of stars. Oh, I could walk any aisle  
and smell wisdom, put a hand out to touch  
the rough curve of bound leather,  
the harsh parchment of dreams.

As for the improbable librarian  
20 with her salt and paprika upsweep,  
her British accent and sweater clip  
(mom of a kid I knew from school)—  
I'd go up to her desk and ask for help  
on bareback rodeo or binary codes,  
25 phonics, Gestalt theory,  
lead poisoning in the Late Roman Empire;  
the play of light in Dutch Renaissance painting;  
I would claim to be researching  
pre-Columbian pottery or Chinese foot-binding,  
30 but all I wanted to know was:  
*Tell me what you've read that keeps  
that half smile afloat  
above the collar of your impeccable blouse.*

So I read *Gone with the Wind* because  
35 it was big, and haiku because they were small.  
I studied history for its rhapsody of dates,  
lingered over Cubist art for the way  
it showed all sides of a guitar at once.  
All the time in the world was there, and sometimes  
40 all the world on a single page.  
As much as I could hold  
on my plastic card's imprint I took,

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<sup>1</sup> sadness

<sup>2</sup> low-cut necklines

greedily: six books, six volumes of bliss,  
the stuff we humans are made of:  
45 words and sighs and silence,  
ink and whips, Brahma and cosine,  
corsets and poetry and blood sugar levels—  
I carried it home, five blocks of aluminum siding  
and past the old garage where, on its boarded-up doors,  
50 someone had scrawled:

I CAN EAT AN ELEPHANT  
IF I TAKE SMALL BITES.

*Yes, I said to no one in particular: That's  
what I'm gonna do!*

— Rita Dove

## Multiple-Choice Questions

**Directions** (1–10): Select the best suggested answer to each question and write its number in the space provided on the answer sheet. The questions may help you think about the ideas and information you might want to use in your essay. You may return to these questions anytime you wish.

**Passage I** (the memoir) — Questions 1–5 refer to Passage I.

- The author's repeated references to *The Field Book of Ponds and Streams* has the effect of emphasizing the book's
  - age
  - significance
  - unpopularity
  - size
- Lines 23 through 31 are developed primarily through the use of
  - listing
  - definition
  - metaphor
  - analogy
- The narrator implies that *The Field Book of Ponds and Streams* was a “shocker” partly because it revealed to her the
  - cruelty of nature
  - capabilities of women
  - existence of a different way of life
  - importance of preserving the environment
- In lines 59 through 63, the narrator implies that studying the book's card gave her a sense of
  - commitment
  - order
  - privacy
  - community
- At the end of the passage, the narrator implies that she is chilled by both the coldness of the floor and her awareness of
  - dishonest people
  - unequal opportunities
  - unworthy goals
  - irresponsible behavior

**Passage II** (the poem) — Questions 6–10 refer to Passage II.

- In lines 9 and 10, equations and geometry are depicted as being
  - difficult
  - beautiful
  - ancient
  - useful
- The images in lines 11 through 15 are used to suggest two different
  - historical eras
  - character types
  - book genres
  - architectural elements
- According to the narrator, the list of topics in lines 24 through 29 was
  - an excuse
  - an assignment
  - a symbol
  - an apology
- The expression “my plastic card's imprint” (line 42) refers to
  - copying books
  - buying books
  - signing out books
  - writing in books
- In line 51, the narrator most likely uses the expression “eat an elephant” to mean
  - gain knowledge
  - achieve fame
  - be patient
  - banish fear

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 8 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 your essay booklet.

### Critical Lens:

“What lasts is what is written. We look to literature to find the essence of an age.”

— Peter Brodie  
(adapted)

### 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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