

SAT LITERATURE SUBJECT TEST PRACTICE PAPER 1

**Directions:** This test consists of selections from literary works and questions on their content, form, and style. After each passage or poem, choose the best answer to each question.

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A. Read the following poem carefully before you choose your answers.

“Elegy”

Let them bury your big eyes  
In the secret earth securely,  
Your thin fingers, and your fair,  
*Line* Soft, indefinite-coloured hair,—  
5 All of these in some way, surely,  
From the secret earth shall rise;  
Not for these I sit and stare,  
Broken and bereft completely:  
Your young flesh that sat so neatly  
*10* On your little bones will sweetly  
Blossom in the air.

But your voice . . . never the rushing  
Of a river underground,  
Not the rising of the wind  
*15* In the trees before the rain,  
Not the woodcock’s watery call,  
Not the note the white-throat utters,  
Not the feet of children pushing  
Yellow leaves along the gutters  
*20* In the blue and bitter fall,  
Shall content my musing mind  
For the beauty of that sound  
That in no new way at all  
Ever will be heard again.

25 Sweetly through the sappy stalk  
Of the vigorous weed,  
Holding all it held before,  
Cherished by the faithful sun,  
On and on eternally  
30 Shall your altered fluid run,  
Bud and bloom and go to seed:  
But your singing days are done;  
But the music of your talk  
Never shall the chemistry  
35 Of the secret earth restore.  
All your lovely words are spoken.  
Once the ivory box is broken,  
Beats the golden bird no more.

(1927)

1. The main verb in the second stanza is
  - A. rising (line 14)
  - B. pushing (line 18)
  - C. fall (line 20)
  - D. shall content (line 21)
  - E. will be heard (line 24)
2. The "voice" of the deceased is compared to all of the following EXCEPT
  - A. the sound of an underground stream
  - B. the wind
  - C. the blossom of a flower
  - D. the music of a bird
  - E. the pattering of feet
3. The phrase "cherished by the faithful sun" (line 28) is an example of
  - A. irony
  - B. paradox
  - C. personification
  - D. oxymoron
  - E. poetic license
4. The poem is written in

- A. a regular meter
- B. the elegiac tradition
- C. a consistent rhyme scheme
- D. an extended allegory
- E. pathetic empathy

**B. Try the following third-person passage and answer the questions that follow.**

They had walked in single file down the path, and even in the open one stayed behind the other. Both were dressed in denim trousers and in denim coats with brass buttons. Both wore black, shapeless hats  
*Line* 5 and both carried tight blanket rolls slung over their shoulders. The first man was small and quick, dark of face, with restless eyes and sharp, strong features. Every part of him was defined: small, strong hands, slender arms, a thin and bony nose. Behind him  
10 walked his opposite, a huge man, shapeless of face, with large, pale eyes, with wide, sloping shoulders; and he walked heavily, dragging his feet a little, the way a bear drags his paws. His arms did not swing at his sides, but hung loosely.

(1937)

This passage is from John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*.

5. The structure of the passage is best described as

- A. two characters are compared and then contrasted
- B. each character is introduced and described
- C. two characters are compared to each other and then each is compared to an animal
- D. two characters' physical characteristics are described, followed by their clothing
- E. characters' outward appearances are stated, followed by their inner thoughts

6. The tone of the passage can best be described as

- A. barely hidden contempt
- B. dispassionate description
- C. unforgiving scrutiny

- D. supernatural invention
- E. focused inquiry

**C. Read the following first-person passage and answer the questions that follow.**

Call me Ishmael. Some years ago—never mind  
how long precisely—having little or no money in  
my purse, I would sail about a little and see the wa-  
*Line* tery part of the world. It is a way I have of driving  
5 off the spleen, and regulating the circulation. When-  
ever I find myself growing grim about the mouth;  
whenever it is a damp, drizzly November in my  
soul; whenever I find myself involuntarily pausing  
before coffin warehouses, and bringing up the rear  
10 of every funeral I meet; and especially whenever my  
hypos get such an upper hand of me, that it requires  
a strong moral principle to prevent me from delib-  
erately stepping into the street, and methodically  
knocking people's hats off—then, I account it high  
15 time to get to sea as soon as I can.

(1851)

This passage is from the opening lines of one of the great classics, *Moby Dick*, by Herman Melville.

7. The passage is best described as

- A. allegorical drama
- B. character introduction
- C. historical commentary
- D. interior monologue
- E. political satire

8. By the end of the passage, Ishmael emerges as

- A. ambitious but generous
- B. crude and inconsiderate
- C. insecure and self-centered
- D. sensitive but self-confident
- E. temperamental but self-aware

9. In line 5, the word "spleen" most nearly means

- A. path
- B. blood
- C. melancholy
- D. kidney
- E. energy

10. Lines 5-15 ("Whenever I find ... as soon as I can.") contain which of the following?

- I. alliteration
- II. hyperbole
- III. parallel structure

- A. none of the above
- B. I only
- C. II only
- D. I & III only
- E. All of the above

**D. Now try applying what you've learned so far to the opening of this short story.**

The year was 2081, and everybody was finally equal. They weren't only equal before God and the law. They were equal every which way. Nobody was smarter than anybody else. Nobody was better looking

Line 5 than anybody else. Nobody was stronger or quicker than anybody else. All this equality was due to the 211th, 212th, and 213th Amendments to the Constitution, and to the unceasing vigilance of agents of the U. S. Handicapper General.

10 Some things about living still weren't quite right, though. April, for instance, still drove people crazy by not being springtime. And it was in that clammy month that the H-G men took George and Hazel Bergeron's fourteen-year-old son, Harrison, away.

(1950)

This passage is from "Harrison Bergeron," a short story in Kurt Vonnegut's collection of short stories *Welcome to the Monkey House*.

1. The narrator's tone can best be described as

- A. satirical
  - B. harshly critical
  - C. wholly frustrated
  - D. mildly emotional
  - E. excessively casual
2. The effect of the repetition of the phrase "nobody was" is to

- A. introduce theme
  - B. underscore a point
  - C. instill a sense of loneliness
  - D. refute a commonly held assumption
  - E. present three contradictory elements
3. In the first paragraph, the author employs which of the following?

- A. Internal rhymes
- B. Mimicry of the speech of the lower class
- C. General comparison
- D. Parallel construction
- E. Introduction of the protagonist

**E. Take a look at the following passage and questions that follow.**

My name had lost its ring of familiarity and I had to be nudged to go and receive my diploma. All my preparations had fled. I neither marched up to the stage like a conquering Amazon, nor did I look in the audience for Bailey's nod of approval. Marguerite Johnson, I heard the name again, my honors were read, there were noises in the audience of appreciation, and I took my place on the stage as rehearsed.

I thought about colors I hated: ecru, puce, lavender, beige, and black.

(1969)

This selection is from the autobiography of Maya Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*.

4. From the passage, it is reasonable to infer that

- A. The audience was more interested in Marguerite's graduation than she was
- B. Marguerite was surprised that her name was called
- C. The experience of graduating was more overwhelming than Marguerite had imagined

- D. Marguerite was unable to get her diploma
  - E. Marguerite had tried to make a painting of the scene before it happened
5. The sentence "I neither marched up to the stage like a conquering Amazon, nor did I look in the audience for Bailey's nod of approval" (lines 3-5) contains an example of
- A. authorial intrusion
  - B. startling anachronism
  - C. complicated syntax
  - D. anthropomorphism
  - E. classical allusion

**F. Now put it all together with this excerpt and accompanying drill questions.**

Line      Their adobe house was the same as two de-  
5      cades before, four large rooms under a thatched  
    roof and three square windows facing south with  
    their frames painted sky blue. Lin stood in the  
    yard facing the front wall while flipping over a  
    dozen mildewed books he had left to be sunned  
    on a stack of firewood. Sure thing, he thought,  
    Shuyu doesn't know how to take care of books.  
    Maybe I should give them to my nephews. These  
10      books are of no use to me anymore.

    Beside him chickens were strutting and geese  
    waddling. A few little chicks were passing back  
    and forth through the narrow gaps in the pal-  
    ing that fenced a small vegetable garden. In the  
15      garden pole beans and long cucumbers hung on  
    trellises, eggplants curved like ox horns, and let-  
    tuce heads were so robust that they covered up  
    the furrows. In addition to the poultry, his wife  
    kept two pigs and a goat for milk. Their sow was  
20      oinking from the pigpen, which was adjacent to

the western end of the vegetable garden. Against the wall of the pigpen a pile of manure waited to be carted to their family plot, where it would go through high-temperature composting in a pit  
25 for two months before being put into the field.

The air reeked of distillers' grains mixed in the pig feed. Lin disliked the sour smell, which was the only uncomfortable thing to him here. From the kitchen, where Shuyu was cooking, came the  
30 coughing of the bellows. In the south, elm and birch crowns shaded their neighbors' straw and tiled roofs. Now and then a dog barked from one of these homes.

Having turned over all the books, Lin went  
35 out of the front wall, which was three feet high and topped with thorny jujube branches. In one hand he held a dog-eared Russian dictionary he had used in high school. Having nothing to do, he sat on their grinding stone, thumbing through  
40 the old dictionary. He still remembered some Russian vocabulary and even tried to form a few short sentences in his mind with some words. But he couldn't recall the grammatical rules for the case changes exactly, so he gave up and  
45 let the book lie on his lap. Its pages fluttered a little as a breeze blew across. He raised his eyes to watch the villagers hoeing potatoes in a distant field, which was so vast that a red flag was planted in the middle of it as a marker, so  
50 that they could take a break when they reached the flag. Lin was fascinated by the sight, but he knew little about farm work.

(1999)

The excerpt above is from Ha Jin's *Waiting*.

6. The passage as a whole can be said to be a contrast of

- A. center and periphery
- B. corruption and honesty
- C. intellect and physicality
- D. heaven and earth
- E. secular and divine

7. Lin's attitude could best be described as

- A. haughty
- B. indifferent
- C. excited
- D. thoughtful
- E. enthralled

8. It is reasonable to infer that

- A. Lin is a professor in the city
- B. Lin is returning home after a long time away
- C. Lin is on vacation
- D. Lin is not used to the country
- E. Lin is blind to the beauty of the country

9. Which of the following is an example of personification?

- A. Long cucumbers hung on trellises (lines 15)
- B. Chickens were strutting and geese waddling (lines 11-12)
- C. The air reeked of distillers' grains mixed in the pig feed (lines 26-27) From the kitchen, where Shuyu was cooking, came the coughing of the bellows" (lines 28-30)
- D. Their sow was oinking from the pigpen (lines 19-20)
- E.

10. The lines "Sure thing, he thought, Shuyu doesn't know how to take care of books. Maybe I should give them to my nephews. These books are of no use to me anymore" (lines 7-10)

I. are an example of indirect dialogue

II. signify a shift in the narrator's focus

III. represent a relinquishing of Lin's pastoral life

- A. I only
- B. II only
- C. III only
- D. I, II, and III
- E. I and II

11. The "sour smell" (line 27) refers to

- A. Shuyu's cooking
- B. the manure near the pigpen
- C. the pig feed
- D. the mildewed books
- E. the nearby field

12. The passage as a whole is best described as

- A. a paeon to rural life
- B. an elegy for a lost time
- C. a detailed description of a place
- D. an epiphanic moment in a young man's life
- E. an allegory of a homeward journey