

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.
Let's take a look at some modern poetry.

“Brass Spittoons”*

Clean the spittoons, boy.
Detroit,
Chicago,
Line Atlantic City,
5 Palm Beach.
Clean the spittoons.
The steam in hotel kitchens,
And the smoke in hotel lobbies,
And the slime in hotel spittoons:
10 Part of my life.
Hey, boy!
A nickel,
A dime,
A dollar,
15 Two dollars a day.
Hey, boy!
A nickel,
A dime,
A dollar,
20 Two dollars
Buys shoes for the baby.
House rent to pay.
God on Sunday.
My God!
25 Babies and church
and women and Sunday
all mixed up with dimes and
dollars and clean spittoons
and house rent to pay.
30 Hey, boy!

A bright bowl of brass is beautiful to the Lord.
Bright polished brass like the cymbals
Of King David's dancers,
Like the wine cups of Solomon.

35 Hey, boy!

A clean spittoon on the altar of the Lord.
A clean bright spittoon all newly polished,—
At least I can offer that.
Com'mere boy!

(1927)

* a spittoon is a receptacle for spit (usually in a public place)

By the way, "Brass Spittoons" was written by Langston Hughes, one of the most prominent figures of the Harlem Renaissance.

1. In line 31, "a bright bowl of brass is beautiful to the Lord," the author is most likely

- A. making an analogy
- B. describing a glorious church scene
- C. using alliteration to emphasize a point
- D. comparing the bowls to the cymbals on the following line
- E. suggesting that poetry is like prayer

2. The list of cities in lines 2-5 implies

- A. the narrator is educated in geography
- B. the narrator is reading a newspaper
- C. the poem could be occurring in any of these cities
- D. the poem is an extended analogy
- E. the cities are symbols of oppressed people

3. In lines 20-21, "Two dollars buys shoes for the baby" is an example of

- A. personification
- B. haphazard alliteration
- C. repetition of a phrase
- D. economic calculation
- E. illustrative allusion

4. The narrator of the poem is most likely

- A. in charge of the hotel maids and janitors
- B. generous with his tips
- C. proud of his work

- D. an outspoken critic
- E. a stingy father

5. The narrator is best characterized as

- A. honest and reverent
- B. selfish and complaining
- C. ignorant and obliging
- D. hard-working and dutiful
- E. religious and childlike

6. Which of the following best describes the nature of the poem in its entirety?

- A. A realistic pastoral scene
- B. An eloquent description of a place
- C. A religious allegory
- D. A didactic narrative
- E. An impassioned portrait

7. The rhythm of the poem adds to the poem's theme in which of the following ways?

- I. It mimics the actions of the speaker.
- II. It contrasts the secular with the divine.
- III. It adds to the lyricism of the poem.

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

8. The last three lines emphasize which of the following?

- A. The hopelessness of the speaker's situation
- B. The emptiness of the speaker's job
- C. The fragility of the speaker's faith
- D. The speaker's perseverance
- E. The comfort the speaker finds in his spirituality

9. The lines "Hey, boy!" (11, 16, 30, 35) are most likely

- A. the speaker calling his son
- B. a derogatory command
- C. an impolite greeting

- D. an urban colloquialism
- E. the speaker's conscience

10. The poem suggests that

- A. poverty is arduous
- B. thriftiness is a virtue
- C. brass is a recently discovered metal
- D. imagination offers escape
- E. good things come to those who wait