

Multiple-Choice Sample Questions: Passage 1

When we were all still alive, the five of us in that kerosene-lit house, on Friday and Saturday nights, at an hour when in the spring and summer there was still abundant light in the air, I would set out in my father's car for town, where my friends lived. I had, by moving ten miles away, at last acquired friends: an illustration of that strange law whereby, like Orpheus leading Eurydice, we achieved our desire by turning our back on it. I had even gained a girl, so that the vibrations were as sexual as social that made me jangle with anticipation as I clowning in front of the mirror in our kitchen, shaving from a basin of stove-heated water, combing my hair with a dripping comb, adjusting my reflection in the mirror until I had achieved just that electric angle from which my face seemed beautiful and everlastingly, by the very volumes of air and sky and grass that lay mutely banked about our home, beloved.

My grandmother would hover near me, watching fearfully, as she had when I was a child, afraid that I would fall from a tree. Delirious, humming, I would swoop and lift her, lift her like a child, crooking one arm under her knees and cupping the other behind her back. Exultant in my height, my strength, I would lift that frail brittle body weighing perhaps a hundred pounds and twirl with it in my arms while the rest of the family watched with startled smiles of alarm. Had I stumbled, or dropped her, I might have broken her back, but my joy always proved a secure cradle. And whatever irony was in the impulse, whatever implicit contrast between this ancient husk, scarcely female, and the pliant, warm girl I would embrace before the evening was done, direct delight flooded away: I was carrying her who had carried me, I was giving my past a dance, I had lifted the anxious care-taker of my childhood from the floor, I was bringing her with my boldness to the edge of danger, from which she had always sought to guard me.

1. The speaker might best be described as someone who is
 - (A) unwilling to forsake his family in order to gain his freedom
 - (B) long overdue in obtaining maturity and acceptance in the adult world
 - (C) struggling to find his own identity and sense of purpose
 - (D) disturbed by the overbearing attentiveness and attitudes of his family
 - (E) defining his passage from the role of protected to that of protector
2. The mythological reference in lines 6-7 reinforces the "strange law" (line 6) that
 - (A) wishes are often best fulfilled when they are least pursued
 - (B) conflict between youth and old age is inevitable
 - (C) anticipation is a keener emotion than realization
 - (D) in our search for heaven, we may also find hell
 - (E) to those who examine life logically, few things are exactly as they seem to be
3. The effect of the words "vibrations" (line 9) and "jangle" (line 10) is most strongly reinforced by which of the following?
 - (A) "adjusting my reflection" (lines 12-13)
 - (B) "electric angle" (lines 13-14)
 - (C) "frail brittle body" (line 22)
 - (D) "irony was in the impulse" (lines 26-27)
 - (E) "implicit contrast" (line 27)

4. Which of the following best restates the idea conveyed in lines 12-16?
 - (A) There are moments in youth when we have an extravagant sense of our own attractiveness.
 - (B) We can more easily change people's opinions of ourselves by adjusting our behavior than by changing our appearances.
 - (C) Vanity is a necessary though difficult part of the maturing process.
 - (D) How others see us determines, to a large degree, how we see ourselves and our environment.
 - (E) Adolescence is a time of uncertainty, insecurity, and self-contradiction.
5. In line 13, "everlastingly" modifies which of the following words?
 - (A) "I" (line 13)
 - (B) "my face" (line 14)
 - (C) "beautiful" (line 14)
 - (D) "lay" (line 146)
 - (E) "beloved" (line 16)
6. The image of the "very volumes of air and sky and grass that lay mutely banked about our home" (lines 14-15) is used to show the speaker's
 - (A) desire to understand his place in the universe
 - (B) profound love of nature
 - (C) feelings of oppression by his environment
 - (D) expansive belief in himself
 - (E) inability to comprehend the meaning of life
7. The attitude of the speaker at the time of the action is best described as
 - (A) understanding
 - (B) exuberant
 - (C) nostalgic
 - (D) superior
 - (E) fearful
8. The passage supports all of the following statements about the speaker's dancing EXCEPT:
 - (A) He danced partly to express his joy in seeing his girl friend later that night.
 - (B) His recklessness with his grandmother revealed his inability to live up to his family's expectations for him.
 - (C) In picking up his grandmother, he dramatized that she is no longer his caretaker.
 - (D) He had danced that way with his grandmother before.
 - (E) His dancing demonstrated the strength and power of youth.
9. The description of the grandmother in lines 20 and 25 emphasizes which of the following?
 - (A) Her emotional insecurity
 - (B) The uniqueness of her character
 - (C) Her influence on the family
 - (D) Her resignation to old age
 - (E) Her poignant fragility
10. Which of the following statements best describes the speaker's point of view toward his grandmother in the second paragraph?
 - (A) Moving to the country has given him a new perspective, one that enables him to realize the importance of his grandmother.
 - (B) Even as a young man, he realizes the uniqueness of his grandmother and her affection for him.
 - (C) He becomes aware of the irony of his changing relationship with his grandmother only in retrospect.
 - (D) It is mainly through his grandmother's interpretation of his behavior that he becomes aware of her influence on him.
 - (E) Comparing the enduring love of his grandmother to his superficial feelings for the young girl heightens his appreciation of his grandmother.
11. Which of the following patterns of syntax best characterizes the style of the passage?
 - (A) Sparse sentences containing a minimum of descriptive language
 - (B) Long sentences interspersed with short, contrasting sentences
 - (C) Sentences that grow progressively more complex as the passage progresses
 - (D) Sentences with many modifying phrases and subordinate clauses
 - (E) Sentences that tend toward the narrative at the beginning, but toward the explanatory at the end of the passage
12. In this passage, the speaker is chiefly concerned with
 - (A) presenting grandparents as symbols worthy of reverence
 - (B) demonstrating the futility of adolescent romanticism
 - (C) satirizing his own youthful egocentricity
 - (D) considering himself as an adolescent on the brink of adulthood
 - (E) revealing his progression from idealism to pragmatism