

## AP English Literature Practice Test 1

**Directions:** *The AP English Literature multiple choice section consists of selections from literary works and questions on their content, form, and style. After reading each passage or poem, choose the best answer to each question and then click on the corresponding answer. Click on the right arrow to move on to the next question. Start your test prep now with our free AP English Literature practice test.*

### **Questions #1–11 are based on the following passage from *The Age of Innocence*, by Edith Wharton**

On a January evening of the early seventies, Christine Nilsson was singing in Faust at the Academy of Music in New York. Though there was already talk of the erection, in remote metropolitan distances “above the Forties,” of a new Opera House which should compete in costliness and splendor with those of the great European capitals, the world of fashion was still content to reassemble every winter in the shabby red and gold boxes of the sociable old Academy.

Conservatives cherished it for being small and inconvenient, and thus keeping out the “new people” whom New York was beginning to dread and yet be drawn to; and the sentimental clung to it for its historic associations, and the musical for its excellent acoustics, always so problematic a quality in halls built for the hearing of music. It was Madame Nilsson’s first appearance that winter, and what the daily press had already learned to describe as “an exceptionally brilliant audience” had gathered to hear her, transported through the slippery, snowy streets in private broughams, in the spacious family landau, or in the humbler but more convenient “Brown coupe.” To come to the Opera in a Brown coupe was almost as honourable a way of arriving as in one’s own carriage; and departure by the same means had the immense advantage of enabling one (with a playful allusion to democratic principles) to scramble into the first Brown conveyance in the line, instead of waiting till the cold-and-gin congested nose of one’s own coachman gleamed under the portico of the Academy. It was one of the great livery-stableman’s most masterly intuitions to have discovered that Americans want to get away from amusement even more quickly than they want to get to it.

When Newland Archer opened the door at the back of the club box the curtain had just gone up on the garden scene. There was no reason why the young man should not have come earlier, for he had dined at seven, alone with his mother and sister, and had lingered afterward over a cigar in the Gothic library with glazed black-walnut bookcases and finial-topped chairs

which was the only room in the house where Mrs. Archer allowed smoking. But, in the first place, New York was a metropolis, and perfectly aware that in metropolises it was “not the thing” to arrive early at the opera; and what was or was not “the thing” played a part as important in Newland Archer’s New York as the inscrutable totem terrors that had ruled the destinies of his forefathers thousands of years ago.

The second reason for his delay was a personal one. He had dawdled over his cigar because he was at heart a dilettante, and thinking over a pleasure to come often gave him a subtler satisfaction than its realisation. This was especially the case when the pleasure was a delicate one, as his pleasures mostly were; and on this occasion the moment he looked forward to was so rare and exquisite in quality that—well, if he had timed his arrival in accord with the prima donna’s stage-manager he could not have entered the Academy at a more significant moment than just as she was singing: “He loves me—he loves me not—HE LOVES ME!” and sprinkling the falling daisy petals with notes as clear as dew.

She sang, of course, “M’ama!” and not “he loves me,” since an unalterable and unquestioned law of the musical world required that the German text of French operas sung by Swedish artists should be translated into Italian for the clearer understanding of English-speaking audiences. This seemed as natural to Newland Archer as all the other conventions on which his life was moulded: such as the duty of using two silver-backed brushes with his monogram in blue enamel to part his hair, and of never appearing in society without a flower (preferably a gardenia) in his buttonhole.

#### Question 1

The phrase "above the Forties" in paragraph 1 most likely refers to:

- A. a different musical era, later than the 1940s
- B. middle-aged people who are opera aficionados
- C. the area of the city with street numbers higher than forty
- D. the extravagant price of the lavish Opera House
- E. the capacity of the new Opera House

#### Question 2

The reference to "the new people whom New York was beginning to dread and yet be drawn to" in paragraph 2 indicates that

- A. prominent, established New Yorkers were enthralled with the new arrivals to the New York social scene.
- B. prominent New Yorkers both loathed and welcomed the inevitable change heralded by these social newcomers.
- C. prominent New Yorkers successfully excluded any new people from established New York society.
- D. the established New Yorkers absolutely detested the relative newcomers to society.

E. New York was an entirely new city with no established social institutions or rituals.

Question 3

Based on the context in paragraph 2, a "brougham" is most probably

- A. A type of horse-drawn vehicle
- B. A breed of horse
- C. A fancy bicycle
- D. A type of transportation for the lower class
- E. An early tram system

Question 4

The narrator's attitude toward the opera-goers, as shown by the parenthetical phrase in paragraph 2 ("with a playful...principles") is primarily one of

- A. admiration of their commitment to equality
- B. disdain for their extreme wealth
- C. disgust at their oppression of lower socioeconomic classes
- D. wry amusement at their attempt to appear to be egalitarian
- E. outrage over their elitism

Question 5

The phrase "totem terrors" is used in paragraph 3 primarily as an image of something that is

- A. frightening
- B. exotic
- C. weak
- D. powerful
- E. irrelevant

Question 6

The description of "an exceptionally brilliant audience" in paragraph 2 is an example of which of the following?

- A. An honest assessment of the audience
- B. An ironic and sarcastic commentary
- C. A hasty and thoughtless conclusion
- D. An orchestrated representation
- E. An unintentionally inaccurate observation

Question 7

In paragraph 4, the word "dilettante" most nearly means

- A. impassioned connoisseur
- B. indulgent amateur
- C. uninitiated rookie
- D. dedicated professional
- E. experienced master

Question 8

When Newland Archer "dawdled over his cigar," in paragraph 4, his attitude can best be described as

- A. anxious
- B. afraid
- C. full of dread
- D. contented
- E. exhilarated

Question 9

It can be inferred from the remarks in the final paragraph ("She sang...buttonhole.") that

- A. Newland Archer has a complete grasp of the reason for all of the social conventions which govern society.
- B. Newland Archer realizes the extraordinary contribution that social rituals and traditions make to society.
- C. Newland Archer is extremely uncomfortable with the inherent mystery of many of the social conventions that guide his behavior.
- D. Newland Archer is content to live according to inscrutable social norms.
- E. Newland Archer is committed to challenging meaningless, purposeless social conventions.

Question 10

Why does the author mention the quote, "He loves me—he loves me not—HE LOVES ME!—" in paragraph 4?

- A. to poke fun at the simplistic lyrics of then-popular operas
- B. to hint that Newland Archer may be preoccupied with something romantic in nature
- C. to indicate that Newland Archer believes he is cultured and cosmopolitan
- D. to show how important fitting into societal norms is to Newland Archer
- E. to describe the vocal ability and sensuality of opera star Christine Nilsson

Question 11

The narrator of the passage is best described as

- A. unreliable
- B. full-of-praise
- C. wry
- D. limited
- E. unbiased

**Answers and Explanations**

Question 1 Explanation: The correct answer is (C). The venue is being constructed "in remote metropolitan distances," in the streets "above the Forties." While only a short physical distance away, this is far enough outside of the fashionable center to be worlds away in the minds of the traditional opera-goers.

Question 2 Explanation: The correct answer is (B). The contrasting word "yet" in the phrase "the new people...drawn to" conveys the ambivalence that established New Yorkers felt toward some of the social interlopers. Clearly, the new people brought excitement yet also threatened the status quo. Any correct answer should capture the conflicted feelings of old New York society. New Yorkers were "beginning to dread and yet be drawn to" the "new people" because they both loathed and welcomed the newcomers.

Question 3 Explanation: The correct answer is (A). In context, the passage states an audience came to the opera and were "transported through the slippery, snowy streets in private broughams, in the spacious family landau, or in the humbler but more convenient 'Brown coupe.'" Since only the upper classes would attend the opera and the description of the events take place before cars and trams were likely used, it's more likely that a "brougham" is a type of carriage.

Question 4 Explanation: The correct answer is (D). The word "playful" is a clue that the narrator views the desire to depart in the "humbler but more convenient" Brown coupe with wry amusement. The fact that he makes note of the convenience of the vehicle indicates that he does not see the opera-goers as sincerely committed to democratic principles.

Question 5 Explanation: The correct answer is (D). Newland Archer's every action was governed by what was considered "the thing" to do, or social conventions, just as his forefathers' destinies were ruled by the "inscrutable totem terrors." Clearly, both "the thing" and the "totem terrors" are extremely powerful.

Question 6 Explanation: The correct answer is (D). The key to unlocking the true meaning of "an exceptionally brilliant audience" is the phrase that explains that the "daily press had already learned to describe" the audience as "an exceptionally brilliant audience." Essentially, then, this description is one that would not occur naturally in the minds of the press. Further proof that the description is artificial rather than authentic is the statement that it was only the opera star's "first performance" of the season and the press had "already" learned to describe the audience in those terms. The author's wry tone clearly conveys the true nature of the newspaper's description.

Question 7 Explanation: The correct answer is (B). The characterization of Newland Archer as an "indulgent amateur" is consistent with the statement that he "dawdled over his cigar" because he enjoyed "thinking over a pleasure" more than actually engaging in it.

Question 8 Explanation: The correct answer is (D). Newland Archer's time spent dawdling with his cigar is explained as an example of him being a "dilettante," in that thinking over a pleasure to come often gave him a subtler satisfaction than its realization. During this time, Newland is relaxed, acknowledging that his "delay is a personal one" of his own choice. The feeling of "contentment," or "satisfaction with the current situation"

is consistent with the statement that "thinking over a pleasure to come often gave him a subtler satisfaction than its realization."

Question 9 Explanation: The correct answer is (D). The remarks describe an "unalterable and unquestioned law of the musical world" which is that the opera should be sung in languages other than that of the audience. Newland Archer compares this law to "all the other conventions" on which his life is based, such as the use of particular types of brushes to part his hair and "never appearing in society without a flower." In other words, this nonsensical—but unquestioned—convention was analogous to the nonsensical—but unquestioned—conventions of Newland Archer's social world.

Question 10 Explanation: The correct answer is (B). The author describes Newland Archer as fashionably late because he was considering a future pleasure, described as "exquisite." The passage goes on to say, "he had timed his arrival in accord with the . . . significant moment" when the singer says "He loves me," a hint that the pleasure Newland Archer is concerned with is romantic in nature.

Question 11 Explanation: The correct answer is (C). The narrator of the piece infuses his/her opinion in several spots, making "wry" comments about the pretention of the subjects and the phoniness of Newland Archer.

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