

AP English Literature Practice Test 2

Directions: The multiple choice portion of the AP English Language exam consists of passages from prose works along with questions about the content, form, and style of these passages. After reading this passage, choose the best answer to each question and click on the corresponding letter of your choice. Then click on the right arrow when you are ready to move on to the next question.

Questions #1–11 are based on the following passage from *Hamlet*, by William Shakespeare.

To be, or not to be: that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them? To die: to sleep;
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;
To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause: there's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life;
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin?

Question 1

Which of the following BEST describes the conflict in this soliloquy by Hamlet?

- A. An internal conflict about whether it is better to live or to die.
- B. An internal conflict about whether to kill his stepfather or not.
- C. An external conflict with his friends and family who are opposed to his taking up arms to fight the enemy.
- D. An external conflict with his priest about whether it is moral to take another person's life or not.

E. An external conflict with Ophelia about whether or not she should commit suicide because he does not love her.

Question 2

What character traits are revealed through the author's use of imagery in this soliloquy given by Hamlet?

- A. Hamlet reveals that he is lazy, sleepy, and unhappy.
- B. Hamlet reveals that he is angry, violent, and vengeful.
- C. Hamlet reveals that he is thoughtful, confused, and indecisive.
- D. Hamlet reveals that he is indifferent to what other people say or think about him.
- E. Hamlet reveals that he is impassioned, forthright, and confident.

Question 3

Which of the following is NOT a function of this speech from Hamlet?

- A. To demonstrate an internal conflict within Hamlet.
- B. To describe an external conflict between Hamlet and the nature of the world.
- C. To spark empathy in the reader for Hamlet's situation.
- D. To create loathing for Hamlet in the reader.
- E. To demonstrate the thematic elements of the play.

Question 4

The line, "To be, or not to be," from Hamlet's soliloquy is one of the most famous lines in literature. Which of the following statements about this line is incorrect?

- A. The author refers to suicide, a taboo topic.
- B. The author ponders life and death, a memorable topic.
- C. The author avoids using any imagery in this specific line and follows it with many images.
- D. The line reveals that the speaker is confident in his opinions about mortality.
- E. The line uses only monosyllabic words.

Question 5

In the context of this soliloquy, what does Shakespeare most likely mean by the phrase "take arms" against troubles?

- A. To wrap one's arms around oneself
- B. To reach out for help from a friend or ally
- C. To steal a weapon in order to inflict suffering on others
- D. To fight against suffering life by committing suicide
- E. To help others to overcome their depression

Question 6

In the context of the soliloquy, the phrase "the rub" most likely means which of the following to Hamlet?

- A. The physical pain that Hamlet has endured.
- B. The problem with not knowing what happens after death.
- C. A solution to the problems that are bothering Hamlet.
- D. The act of suicide that Hamlet is considering.

E. A distraction from Hamlet's problems.

Question 7

The phrase "when we have shuffled off this mortal coil" most likely refers to which of the following?

- A. deep sleep
- B. lucid dreaming
- C. the moment of death
- D. the afterlife
- E. nightmares

Question 8

What rhetorical device is used in the lines quoted below?

*For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin?*

- A. personal anecdote
- B. rhetorical question
- C. purposeful repetition
- D. deceptive imagery
- E. pointed hyperbole

Question 9

The tone of this soliloquy can best be characterized as

- A. accusatory
- B. balanced
- C. pensive
- D. calculated
- E. conservative

Question 10

The phrase "insolence of office" is an example of

- A. personification
- B. metaphor
- C. simile
- D. irony
- E. motif

Question 11

What purpose does the repetition of "the" serve towards the end of the soliloquy?

- A. It highlights the vast number of problems Hamlet is facing
- B. It provides cacophony to help readers realize how harsh Hamlet's suicide would be.
- C. It shows that Hamlet is rambling and not making much sense.
- D. It marks Hamlet's decisiveness at the end of the soliloquy.
- E. It makes Hamlet's consideration of suicide seem more unreasonable.

Answers and Explanations

Question 1 Explanation: The correct answer is (A). In this speech Hamlet struggles to come up with an answer to the question, "To be, or not to be." He is conflicted internally about whether it is better to live or to die. By the end of the soliloquy he is still conflicted internally and has not come to a conclusion.

Question 2 Explanation: The correct answer is (C). Hamlet contemplates whether it is better to live or die and does not come to a conclusion. When Hamlet discusses his options, he paints a visual image in reader's heads by comparing these choices to "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune," and "tak[ing] arms against a sea of troubles." By presenting both of these choices as undesirable outcomes, he shows how thoughtful, confused, and indecisive he is.

Question 3 Explanation: The correct answer is (D). He mentions several conflicts with the nature of the world that have contributed to his unhappy state. His desperate thoughts create empathy in the reader for Hamlet's situation, not loathing.

Question 4 Explanation: The correct answer is (D). Rather than declaring a confident opinion, Hamlet is questioning the nature of mortality and the afterlife. The line does refer to suicide and the general nature of life and death, as mentioned in (A) and (B). It is also void of images, as suggested in (C). Each word in the line has only one syllable, as stated in (E).

Question 5 Explanation: The correct answer is (D). Hamlet asks if it is "nobler" to suffer through life's tragedies or to take charge ("take arms") and end his misery by killing himself.

Question 6 Explanation: The correct answer is (B). Hamlet follows this phrase with the famous line, "for in that sleep of death what dreams may come," referring to what happens to all of us after we die. He wants to commit suicide, but he is afraid of "what dreams may come," because death might bring more tortures than what he is enduring in life.

Question 7 Explanation: The correct answer is (D). Immediately prior to that phrase, Hamlet likens death to sleep. The "dreams" that will come "when we are shuffled off this mortal coil," are most likely whatever would come in the afterlife.

Question 8 Explanation: The correct answer is (B). This entire section is one long rhetorical question. Hamlet is not looking for an answer, rather he is posing a philosophical question.

Question 9 Explanation: The correct answer is (C). This speech is one of deep reflective contemplation. The word "pensive" best matches this description.

Question 10 Explanation: The correct answer is (A). The word "insolence" means rude and disrespectful behavior. Since "Office" does not refer to a person, Shakespeare is attributing a human trait to an abstract idea.

Question 11 Explanation: The correct answer is (A). This repetition is not cacophonous, nor is it uncontrolled. While he is still indecisive, he repeats "the" to help punctuate the problems building in his mind.

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