

Sample Texts from past Challenges



WORDWRIGHT

Blue Division Fiction Selections

"Powder"	Tobias Wolff
"A Visit of Charity"	Eudora Welty
"Wild Plums"	Grace Stone Coates
"Indian Camp"	Ernest Hemingway
"Once Upon A Time"	Nadine Gordimer
"Extraordinary Little Cough"	Dylan Thomas
"The Man of the World"	Frank O'Connor

Gold Division Fiction Selections

"The Grave"	Katherine Anne Porter
"Still of Some Use"	John Updike
"Barcelona"	Alice Adams
"Garrison Junction"	Maile Meloy
from "A Small House at Allington"	Anthony Trollope
"Second Tree from the Corner"	E. B. White
"Walled Garden"	Peter Taylor
"Message in a Bottle"	Nadine Gordimer

Blue Division Poetry Selections

"Naming of Parts"	Henry Reed
"Dulce et Decorum Est"	Wilfred Owen
"Daedalus"	Alastair Reid
"The Writer"	Richard Wilbur
"After Apple Picking"	Robert Frost
"Birches"	Robert Frost
"The Hearth"	C. K. Williams
"Base Details"	Siegfried Sassoon
"Ex-Basketball Player"	John Updike
"To an Athlete Dying Young"	A. E. Housman

Gold Division Poetry Selections

"Bored"	Margaret Atwood
"Dreaming about the Dead"	Katha Pollitt
"Poppies"	Mary Oliver
"The Butcher's Son"	Thom Gunn
"The Spring Poem"	David Smith
"Spring and All"	William Carlos Williams
"Boy at the Window"	Richard Wilbur
"The Snow Man"	Wallace Stevens
"One Art"	Elizabeth Bishop
"Blackberries for Amelia"	Richard Wilbur
"Blackberry-Picking"	Seamus Heaney

Blue Division Essay Selections

"Tragedy as Child's Play"	Lance Morrow
"How It Feels to Be Colored Me"	Zora Neale Hurston
"Shooting an Elephant"	George Orwell
"The Seam of the Snail"	Cynthia Ozick
"September 11, 2001"	John Updike
"A Lovely Sort of Lower Purpose"	Ian Frazier
"The Art of Unhappiness"	James Poniewozik

Gold Division Essay Selections

"Once More to the Lake"	E. B. White
"Speech on Race"	Barack Obama
"We Are Still Only Human"	Verlyn Klinkenborg
from "White Album"	Joan Didion
"Honestly, You Shouldn't Have"	Anna Quindlen
"The Human Difference"	Stephen Jay Gould
"Second Inaugural Speech"	Abraham Lincoln

Sample Questions from past Challenges

Sample Fiction Questions

All of the following contrasts are explored in the story *except*

- a. goodness / evil.
- b. safety / danger.
- c. reason / superstition.
- d. youth / age.
- e. transience / permanence.

The sea-wave imagery, which occurs twice (l. 22, l. 38), serves chiefly to suggest

- a. the mustiness of the nursing home.
- b. Marian's sense of dislocation here.
- c. the nurse's imperturbability.
- d. the nurse's association with science and nature.
- e. the fishiness of Marian's motives.

On a metaphorical level, Jerry's swim through the tunnel represents his

- a. rejection of the values of adult society.
- b. achievement of superiority over the natives.
- c. birth (or rebirth) as an individual.
- d. oneness with nature.
- e. triumph over a fear of death.

The plum she finally eats represents all of the following to the little girl *except*

- a. the thrill of disobedience.
- b. the satisfaction of new knowledge
- c. the shame of sin.
- d. the pleasure of sensuality.
- e. the achievement of separate individuality.

A theme quietly but steadily developed through this story could be summed up by which of the following statements?

- a. Courage consists largely of common sense.
- b. Men are braver than women.
- c. Women are braver than men.
- d. Appearances are very often deceptive.
- e. The chief cause of crime is poverty.

Hemingway's way of presenting an extreme and emotionally wrenching experience is characterized here by

- a. restraint.
- b. sentimentality.
- c. sensationalism.
- d. pity.
- e. sorrow.

The style of the first paragraph evokes the stream-of-consciousness of a young child by using all of the following *except*

- a. exclamatory expressions.
- b. imperative verbs.
- c. run-on-sentences.
- d. child's-eye metaphors.
- e. baby-talk diction.

Sample Poetry Questions

Quietly underlying the poem's imagery is an awareness of

- the story of Sleeping Beauty.
- the Greek myth of Atalanta and the golden apples.
- Biblical stories about the Garden of Eden.
- the myth of Midas's golden touch.
- folk tales about Johnny Appleseed.

In addition to the patterned end rhymes, the most prominent musical device in the poem is

- internal rhyme.
- alliteration.
- onomatopoeia.
- assonance.
- feminine rhyme.

The "ruin'd choirs" image in line 4 is used here to describe

- a church belfry.
- birdcages.
- cathedral ruins.
- bare branches.
- twilight.

Which of the following images in the poem is used to express both brilliance and evanescence?

- "orange flares" (l. 2)
- "lacy leaves" (l. 6)
- "curved blade" (l. 17)
- "rough and spongy gold" (l. 29)
- "river of earthy delight" (ll. 31-32)

The language of the final stanza differs from that of the preceding stanzas. It is

- more metaphorical.
- more formal in its vocabulary.
- more oratorical in tone and syntax.
- characterized by more sensory imagery.
- more regular in its rhyme and rhythm.

The immediacy of the scene is conveyed here mainly through the poet's use of

- vivid adjectives.
- active verbs and verb participles.
- concrete and colorful nouns.
- onomatopoeia.
- long sentences.

Sample Nonfiction Questions

The author's main theme in this personal essay turns out to be

- the immutability of experience.
- verities of rural life in America.
- innocent pleasures of youth in summer.
- intimations of mortality.
- relationships between generations.

An extended metaphor underlying the storm description in paragraph 7 refers to a

- military campaign.
- theatrical production.
- clock.
- shower.
- concert.

The first sentence of the third paragraph (ll. 32-39) is remarkable for its

- simple declarative syntax.
- formally balanced parallelism.
- accretion of phrases.
- lofty diction.
- spare use of detail.

A humorous effect is achieved in paragraph 5 through the use of

- a surprising reversal of points previously made.
- comically disparate examples.
- an amusing premise.
- whimsical word play.
- deadpan irony

The author suggests that human beings and computers share all of the following traits *except*

- an ability to apply rules.
- a susceptibility to breakdown.
- an ability to communicate.
- a capacity for uncertainty.
- an ability to interpret information.

Between the beginning of the essay and its end, the author's mood changes from

- impassive to angry.
- dazed to resolved.
- impartial to judgmental.
- stunned to incredulous.
- despondent to euphoric.

By the end, Thomas has implicitly substituted for his original electronic metaphor a new metaphor comparing human society to something

- biological.
- geological.
- urban.
- scholarly.
- mechanical.

Sample Post-Test Discussion Questions

Lockwood argues that the meaning of an act depends largely upon the intention behind it. The Renaissance statesman Niccolo Machiavelli made a related point when he said, "The ends justify the means." Do you agree? (Does the adage "The road to hell is paved with good intentions" shed light on this discussion?)

What do the wild plums come to stand for in this story? What do they mean to the Slumps? To the little girl? To her father and mother? How can you account for the fact that while the mother finds the plums "bitter" (l. 245), to the girl they taste like "wild honey" (ll. 247-48)? Is one of them more right than the other?

Poems about spring are almost obligated to touch upon well-worn themes: death and rebirth, decay and rejuvenation. What's *original* about the way these two poems have treated these old themes?

The story explores certain stereotypes about the differences between men and women. What are those stereotypes? What conclusion does the story seem to draw about them? Do you agree with the author's point of view? In particular, look at Persis's thought (ll. 182ff) that begins, "Men are always running, chasing something." Why does she hold this opinion? In what ways does Thad resemble the thief (the other significant male character in the story)?