

Part 3 (Questions 21–27)

Directions: On the following pages read Passage I (an excerpt from a short story) and Passage II (a poem) about growing old. You may use the margins to take notes as you read. Answer the multiple-choice questions on the answer sheet provided for you. Then write your response for question 26 on page 1 of your essay booklet and question 27 on page 2 of your essay booklet.

Passage I

I'm old, they say. The calendar says so, too. But consider me not a humble man, if you wish, the mirror does not say so, and sometimes in my veins I feel youth like a streak of forked lightning. It travels fast, this old youth, and strikes as it never did at twenty or even forty, a little fistful heart of springtime distilled out of all time and no time. Then I feel shot
5 through with a sudden psalm,¹ and a tiger pursues the field mouse of my pastured old age. All the pictures that once unloosed themselves on my fire-eating brain stop, still as mountains with morning drawn up in their valleys. I walk back across my own history.

I do not say it is all pleasant. There is a saying that what you lose in one place you make up in another, which with the proper forbearance can, I suppose, become a truth. But no
10 one escapes life, and no one beats it, and every loss is a tear in the heart's tender flesh.

"Give me rain and I will make flowers," my mother said, and she did. But I am a man, an old and impatient one, no doubt, and I resent not being a god, expect too much, weaken with the perfidy² of friends and the trickery of the flesh, lost frontiers, blind alleys, the death of dreams, solitude, pain, the heroes climbing up the stairs and flinging back dust
15 into the eyes.

I was thinking about all this the other evening. It was the hour that belongs to me. You see I have my little bag of tricks too, like any old peddler. It is a foolishness what I do, the last thing, I believe, that anyone would suspect.

The lights have been turned out in my shop (it is really a gallery of pictures) and my
20 people have gone out into the dusk, and the blind spots of the rooms are washed in a curious game of hide-and-seek before the total darkness. In the blue and lilac the pictures die. I can wander through these rooms alone as a ghost or an actor saying his lines to an empty house. Up the stairs I roam in the scent of turpentine and old fires and dust, through the gilder's³ room with the laid aside tools and droppings of gold, and down again crossing
25 the holes of light that once were doors.

It pleases me to do this on certain evenings in the spring when the light spreads out so softly over the town, and I can see a mile outward from my uppermost room. Most of the time, though, I would rather stand, well hidden by the draperies, at an enormous window which fronts the sidewalks and the street. At this hour no one goes by. The traffic has
30 become a flutter, the pigeons assemble on the cornices, and the tight clang of the daytime bells tolling the hour becomes suddenly as spun of dreams as the party-day sashes of girls adrift in the wind. It is six o'clock. I have become a poet.

¹psalm — sacred song or poem

²perfidy — disloyalty

³gilder — one who works with layered gold

Who would believe it of me, a man who would not love anything he could not respect, honest, bitter as a green lemon, a lover of art and fine merchandise, debunker⁴ of man,
35 woman, and child, and, though I hate the word, old? This is my secret. I am a poet as wild and strange as any, and I own this city by right of common memory. ...

—Phyllis Roberts

excerpted from "Hero"

The Virginia Quarterly Review, Spring 1959

⁴debunker — one who exposes falseness

Passage II
On Our Dog's Birthday

Throughout the day,
he'll press his wet nose
against the floor to ceiling
window and watch anything
5 that passes by, now and
then falling asleep. When
the cats come in, they'll
nuzzle their cold faces
against the soft warmth
10 of his forehead. We'll
also look into the day,
watch the thick gray
beech trees' branches
sway in the coming
15 winter storm. Today
our dog is ten. When
we go to another room,
he'll follow. When later
we take our walk, he will
20 wander off after smells
he finds along the way.
After we return, if I toss
his ragged stuffed lion,
he'll look at me, seem
25 to want to say, "You
don't have to play with me.
I'm fine," then mosey
over, and take the toy
back to his spot. Tonight,
30 if he needs to go out, he
will sit by the side of the bed,
my wife and I sleeping deep
in our marriage, and woof
softly, clear his throat,
35 as if he doesn't want to be a bother.

—Jack Ridl
Harpur Palate, Summer 2004

Multiple-Choice Questions

Directions (21–25): Select the best suggested answer to each question and record your answer on the separate answer sheet provided for you.

Passage I (the short story excerpt) — Questions 21–23 refer to Passage I.

- 21 The purpose of the word “it” in line 8 is to
- (1) define a historical term
 - (2) connect ideas between paragraphs
 - (3) signal a change in mood
 - (4) introduce opposing arguments
- 22 Lines 11 through 15 reveal how the narrator’s experiences have caused him to feel
- (1) optimism
 - (2) awe
 - (3) boredom
 - (4) disappointment
- 23 The description of the narrator’s behavior in lines 22 and 23 and in lines 27 through 29 suggests the narrator sees himself as
- (1) stressed
 - (2) helpless
 - (3) disconnected
 - (4) intimidating

Passage II (the poem) — Questions 24–25 refer to Passage II.

- 24 Lines 22 through 29 suggest that, with age, the dog has become more
- (1) aware of his youthful training
 - (2) conscious of his relationship with his owners
 - (3) fearful of strangers who approach
 - (4) disruptive when his owners leave him
- 25 The form of this poem can best be described as
- (1) a ballad
 - (2) haiku
 - (3) free verse
 - (4) a sonnet

Short-Response Questions

Directions (26–27): Write your responses to question 26 on page 1 of your essay booklet and question 27 on page 2 of your essay booklet. Be sure to answer *both* questions.

26 Write a well-developed paragraph in which you use ideas from *both* Passage I (the short story excerpt) and Passage II (the poem) to establish a controlling idea about growing old. Develop your controlling idea using specific examples and details from *both* Passage I and Passage II.

27 Choose a specific literary element (e.g., theme, characterization, structure, point of view, etc.) or literary technique (e.g., symbolism, irony, figurative language, etc.) used by *one* of the authors. Using specific details from *either* Passage I (the short story excerpt) *or* Passage II (the poem), in a well-developed paragraph, show how the author uses that element or technique to develop the passage.