MASSACHUSETTS ENGLISH 12 · UNIT 1 · 25 QUESTIONS

British Literature — Practice Test

This practice test was made by AI and there may be mistakes. If a question or answer looks wrong, use the Flag a mistake button to let Brett know so he can fix it.

Source I - The Scribe's Window

Use this reading for questions 1 to 5.

In a stone room above the market town, a young scribe named Alden copied books by hand. Each morning he sharpened his quills, mixed his ink, and settled at a slanted desk beside a narrow window. The work was slow. A single page could take a whole day, and one careless stroke could spoil hours of labor.

Alden did not mind the slowness. He loved the way a finished page looked, with its even lines and bright first letter painted in red and gold. He believed that books kept memory alive, carrying stories and laws from one generation to the next, long after the people who first told them were gone.

One winter, a traveler brought news of a printing press in a distant city, a machine that could make many copies of a book in days. Alden felt both wonder and fear. He wondered what would happen to scribes like him, yet he also imagined books reaching people who had never owned one. By spring, he had decided to learn the new craft, not to fight it, because he wanted stories to travel farther than his own hand could carry them.

1 **According to Source I, what is the main idea of the passage?**

- **A** Alden restores an old printing press found in his town
- **B** Alden copies books by hand and then decides to learn printing so stories can reach more people
- **C** Alden becomes a traveler who carries news between cities
- **D** Alden paints pictures to sell in the market town

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2 **According to Source I, which word best describes Alden?**

- A thoughtful, because he weighs both the wonder and the fear of a new invention
- B careless, because he spoils many pages
- C greedy, because he wants to own many books
- D lazy, because he works only in the morning

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3 **According to Source I, why does Alden value his work as a scribe?**

- A because it pays more than any other trade in town
- B because he enjoys painting market scenes
- C because books keep memory alive for later generations
- D because the traveler pays him to copy laws

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4 **According to Source I, what can the reader infer about Alden's decision in spring?**

- A he fears change so much that he stops working
- B he decides to leave books behind forever
- C he plans to destroy the printing press
- D he chooses to adapt so that stories can travel farther

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5 **According to Source I, the narrow window in the stone room most likely symbolizes**

- A Alden's wealth and high rank
- B the limited but steady light by which old knowledge was preserved
- C the traveler's road to the distant city
- D the market town's busy trade

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Source II - On the Moor at Dusk

Use this reading for questions 6 to 9.

The wind walks low across the moor at dusk,

and heather bends like listeners bowing their heads.

A path of pale stone climbs toward the hill,

where the last light gathers and quietly fades.

I have walked this way in joy and in grief,

and the moor has kept both, asking nothing in return.

6 **According to Source II, the line about heather bending like listeners is an example of**

- **A** a simile, because it compares heather to listeners using like
- **B** a metaphor, because it says heather is a listener
- **C** personification only, because it gives heather a voice
- **D** hyperbole, because it exaggerates the wind

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7 **According to Source II, which word best describes the mood of the poem?**

A angry and violent

B playful and comic

C quiet and reflective

D frightened and urgent

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8 **According to Source II, what does the speaker suggest about the moor?**

A it changes its path every night

B it frightens everyone who walks there

C it belongs only to travelers from distant cities

D it remembers the speaker's joy and grief without demanding anything

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9 **According to Source II, how many lines does the poem have?**

ANSWER

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Source III - The Playhouse in London

Use this reading for questions 10 to 13.

In Shakespeare's London, a play was a shared public event. People from many walks of life crowded into an open air playhouse: merchants, apprentices, soldiers, and nobles. The cheapest places were in the yard, where groundlings stood through the whole play, close to the stage.

Because there were few sets and no electric lights, language had to do much of the work. Actors used words to tell the audience whether a scene took place at night, on a battlefield, or in a forest. Costumes, music, and gesture helped, but the spoken lines carried the story.

Plays were performed in the afternoon, in daylight, so actors could see the crowd and the crowd could see them. A successful play depended on holding that crowd's attention, which is one reason Shakespeare's plays mix comedy and tragedy, highborn characters and common ones, and fast action with quiet speeches.

10 **According to Source III, what is the main idea of the passage?**

- **A** London playhouses were only for nobles
- **B** In Shakespeare's London, plays were shared public events that relied mainly on language to create their worlds
- **C** Actors in London never used costumes or music
- **D** All plays in London were performed at night by candlelight

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11 **According to Source III, who were the groundlings?**

A the people who stood in the yard close to the stage

B the actors who played kings

C the writers who sold plays to the playhouse

D the nobles who sat in private rooms

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12 **According to Source III, why did language have to do much of the work in these plays?**

A because the audience could not see the stage

B because actors could not speak loudly

C because there were few sets and no electric lights

D because plays were performed in silence

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13 **According to Source III, why did Shakespeare's plays mix comedy and tragedy?**

A to confuse the audience

B to avoid using costumes

C to follow a law about play length

D to hold the attention of a mixed crowd

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14 **Beowulf is best described as**

A a short lyric poem about nature

B an Old English epic about a hero who faces monsters

C a medieval romance written in French

D a Victorian novel about London

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15 **In Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, the frame story is that**

- A a group of pilgrims traveling to Canterbury tell tales to pass the time
- B one knight tells every tale
- C a king orders tales to be written in Latin
- D monks copy tales in a stone room

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16 **A kenning in Old English poetry is**

- A a long list of kings
- B a rhyme scheme used in sonnets
- C a two word figurative phrase, such as whale road for the sea
- D a type of stage direction

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17 **A Shakespearean sonnet has how many lines?**

ANSWER _____

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18 **Blank verse, used by Milton in Paradise Lost, is**

A rhymed couplets in groups of four

B verse written only for songs

C free verse with no regular meter

D unrhymed iambic pentameter

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19 **Which statement best describes dramatic irony?**

A the audience knows something a character does not know

B the narrator tells the story in the past tense

C two characters argue about the same event

D a play ends with a song

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20 **Jane Austen's novels are best known for**

A tales of sea voyages and monsters

B social satire and the manners of her class, often through free indirect thought and sharp dialogue

C long poems about the countryside

D plays performed at the Globe

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21 **The Romantic poets, including Wordsworth, most often valued**

A factory machinery and city trade

B strict classical rules above feeling

C nature, emotion, and the individual imagination

D scientific reports in verse

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22 **In a tragedy, a tragic flaw is**

A a mistake in the printing of a play

B a comic scene placed after a sad scene

C a villain who appears only at the end

D a weakness in a central character that helps bring about a downfall

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23 **Charles Dickens often used his novels to**

- A praise factory owners without criticism
- B expose social problems such as poverty and harsh working conditions
- C write only about the royal court
- D avoid describing London at all

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24 **Which is the best example of alliteration?**

- A the brave boy battled boldly
- B the sea sang softly
- C the wind is like a whisper
- D time flies

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25

The main purpose of a soliloquy is to

A describe the setting for the audience

B let two characters argue in rhyme

C let a character speak thoughts aloud, usually alone on stage

D end a play with a moral

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ANSWER KEY

1. B
2. A
3. C
4. D
5. B
6. A
7. C
8. D
9. 6
10. B
11. A
12. C
13. D
14. B
15. A
16. C
17. 14
18. D
19. A
20. B
21. C
22. D
23. B
24. A
25. C

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