

1. In Colleen McElroy's poem "Monologue for Saint Louis," published in 1980, the speaker returns to her childhood home in St. Louis, Missouri, after an extended absence and contemplates how she has changed. Read the poem carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how McElroy uses literary elements and techniques to convey the speaker's complex experience of returning home.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation.
- Select and use evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

Monologue for Saint Louis

home again and the heart barely there
when choked by clusters of words
thick as the clumps of blue-black
grapes we snatched every summer

Line 5 from the neighbor's arbor¹
succulent pockets of flesh laced
with green staining our lips and fingers

it is summer again and I am home
vowing penance² for all my disappearances
10 since that first summer
when the arbor was clotted
with pockets of grapes latticed on each
interlocking vine

now earthworms have trellised the arbor
15 and that crumbling heap of rotting black
sticks cannot shield us from wind or words
we are the women we whispered about each summer
familiar houses and schoolyards have disappeared
childhood streets are blocked with singular black

20 one-way signs aligned like a lacework
of warnings or accusing fingers
I am home again
and my cousins sit in their cloaks of black
skin dragging me through twisted vines
25 of genetic maps thick with childhood vows

they remember each summer
how each year I vowed to return home
forever but I am lost in a riddle of words
home is a vacant lot its back yard clotted
30 with a stainless-steel arch³ and clusters
of tiny parks sprouting like trelliswork

enclosing some strange summer
resort my cousins have disappeared
into like the shadows of beasts and bad air
35 that infect this flat country and I am home
a stranger in love with words
with tart sweet clusters of poems

“Monologue for Saint Louis” from *Queen of the Ebony Isles* ©1984 by Colleen J. McElroy. Published by Wesleyan University Press.
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1: vining plants trained to grow over a lattice, framework, or trellis

2: an act that demonstrates regret and offers amends through self-sacrifice

3: the Gateway Arch, a 630-foot-tall arch located in a national park

2. The following excerpt is from Rachel Cusk's novel *The Bradshaw Variations*, published in 2008. This passage describes Thomas Bradshaw's morning interactions with members of his household. Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how Cusk uses literary elements and techniques to develop a complex portrayal of Thomas.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation.
- Select and use evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

Par:

- 1 What is art? Thomas Bradshaw asks himself this question frequently. He does not yet know the answer. He used to believe art was a kind of pretending, but he doesn't think that any more. He uses the word *authenticity* to describe what he thinks now. Some things are artificial and some are authentic. It is easy to tell when something is artificial. The other is harder.
- 2 In the mornings he listens to music, to Bach or Schubert. He stands in the kitchen in his dressing gown. He waits for his wife and daughter to come downstairs. He is forty-one, the age when a life comes out of its own past like something out of a mould; and either it is solid, all of a piece, or it fails to hold its shape and disintegrates. The disintegration is not difficult to imagine. It is the solidity, the concrete form, that is mystifying. Disintegration does not involve questions of authenticity, but of a solid form the questions must be asked.
- 3 Mostly, in fact, it is the lodger¹ Olga who comes down first. He hears her tread on the stairs and doesn't recognise it: that is how, every day, he identifies her, by hearing her quiet, slightly plodding step and wondering who on earth it belongs to. She ducks her peroxided head at him, flashes her uncertain train-track smile. For six months now Olga has been embroiled in protracted dentistry. Beneath the metal braces her teeth are grey and disorderly. As a child her mother apparently never took her to the dentist. This was not out of neglect, Olga has told him. It was because Olga was frightened of going, and her mother couldn't bear her to be frightened, or to feel pain. She has told Thomas that she is saving up for a bridge and a set of caps. She has three different jobs and all the money goes on her teeth. She complains of the expense: in Poland the cost of dentistry is much lower. There, she could have all the work done—'All!' Olga repeats, making a chopping motion with her hand—for what she pays here for just one monthly visit.
- 4 These conversations do not entirely engage Thomas. When he talks to Olga he is both there and not there. He is waiting for Tonie² to come down, as the platform guard waits for the London train to come through. Tonie's appearances in the kitchen are brief. Like the train she stops, disgorging³ activity, and then departs again. It is a matter of minutes, but he needs to be ready. He hears Olga—in some ways he even identifies himself with her, both of them platform dwellers—but when she speaks he cannot reciprocate. He is as though sealed behind glass. He wonders if she realises this, realises that she can see but not touch him. She drinks tea from a giant Garfield⁴ mug and eats cereal, topping up the milk frequently from the plastic container that stands beside her bowl. He glimpses her bare, mushroom-coloured legs beneath the table, her feet clad in large soft slippers. He turns the music up a little: it is an offering, a form of explanation. He wants her to know that he is aware of his own limitations, of his failure to

make anything of their conversations in the morning. Sometimes this failure appears to him as something intrinsic to time itself, as an inner force, like decay. They pass and are forgotten, these interludes in the kitchen. And yet they are always the same: he could stand here for a hundred years and still have much the same conversation with Olga. There are, it seems, limitless copies of this conversation, but it never goes anywhere or develops. By the same token, it never dies. It has no relationship to time. This may be because it lacks authenticity.

Excerpt from *THE BRADSHAW VARIATIONS* by Rachel Cusk. Copyright © 2009 and 2012 by Rachel Cusk, used by permission of Farrar, Straus and Giroux and The Wylie Agency LLC. All rights reserved.

- 1:** a person who rents a room in a house
- 2:** his wife
- 3:** pouring out, releasing
- 4:** a cartoon cat

3. In many works of literature, characters may be significantly affected by memories of the past. A character may be inspired by the past, haunted by the past, unable to let go of the past, or motivated by the past to craft a better future.

Either from your own reading or from the list below, choose a work of fiction in which a character is significantly affected by a memory. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how the impact of the memory on the character contributes to an interpretation of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation.
- Provide evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

Afterlife
Annie John
Behold the Dreamers
Beloved
Big Fish
The Buried Giant
Ceremony
Crime and Punishment
A Doll's House
Dominicana
The English Patient
The Farming of Bones
Fences
A Gesture Life
The Glass Menagerie
The Importance of Being Earnest
Invisible Man
Jane Eyre

Kindred
Love Medicine
Macbeth
The Mayor of Casterbridge
Mrs. Dalloway
The Nickel Boys
Obasan
Of Mice and Men
On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous
Purple Hibiscus
The Scarlet Letter
The Secret History
The Sound and the Fury
A Tale of Two Cities
Washington Black
The Woman Warrior
Wuthering Heights
The Yellow Birds

STOP
END OF EXAM

1. In Victor Hernández Cruz's poem "Two Guitars," published in 2001, the speaker imagines that two guitars are alive and engaging in conversation about their musical experiences. Read the poem carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how Hernández Cruz uses literary elements and techniques to convey a complex portrayal of the guitars' musical world.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation.
- Select and use evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

Two Guitars

Two guitars were left in a room all alone
They sat on different corners of the parlor
In this solitude they started talking to each other

My strings are tight and full of tears

Line 5 The man who plays me has no heart

I have seen it leave out of his mouth

I have seen it melt out of his eyes

It dives into the pores of the earth

When they squeeze me tight I bring

10 Down the angels who live off the chorus

The trios singing loosen organs

With melodious screwdrivers

Sentiment comes off the hinges

Because a song is a mountain put into

15 Words and landscape is the feeling that

Enters something so big in the harmony

We are always in danger of blowing up

With passion

The other guitar:

- 20 In 1944 New York
When the Trio Los Panchos¹ started
With Mexican & Puerto Rican birds²
I am the one that one of them held
Tight like a woman
- 25 Their throats gardenia³ gardens
An airport for dreams
I've been in theaters and cabarets
I played in an apartment on 102nd street
After a baptism pregnant with women
- 30 The men flirted and were offered
Chicken soup
Echoes came out of hallways as if from caves
Someone is opening the door now
The two guitars hushed and there was a
- 35 Resonance in the air like what is left by
The last chord of a bolero.⁴

Victor Hernández Cruz, "Two Guitars" from *Maraca: New and Selected Poems, 1965-2000*. Copyright © 2001 by Victor Hernández Cruz. Reprinted with the permission of Coffee House Press. www.coffeehousepress.org.

1: a musical group that specializes in boleros and other romantic ballads

2: guitars

3: a type of plant known for its striking flowers

4: a genre of romantic music that originated in Cuba and has been popular throughout the Americas; common themes include unrequited love, betrayal, and abandonment

2. The following excerpt is from Jeannette Haien's novel *The All of It*, published in 1986. In this passage, Father Declan, an Irish priest, is driving home after a successful fishing trip. Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how Haien uses literary elements and techniques to develop a complex portrayal of Father Declan.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation.
- Select and use evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

Par:

- 1 Nothing exaggerates a sense of lonely solitude so much as a long night drive through thrashing rain and dense, culprit fog.
- 2 Crouched over the steering-wheel of the old Ford, his head thrust forward, turtle-like, out of his collar, the only sound the sidelong loping strokes of the windshield wipers, he peered ahead through the car lights' gauzy beam at the narrow, winding road which kept vanishing and reappearing like a dark ribbon in a magician's hand, seen now, now not, depending on the shift of the fog....
- 3 It was terrible the way his splendid excitement had vanished almost the instant he'd left the Castle and started the homeward journey, the lilt and thrill of his great adventure draining from him suddenly, to be as suddenly replaced by a violent flush of self-pity caused (admit it) by the sorrowful fact that at the end of the long night drive there would be nought for him but the bulk emptiness of the bleak parish-house, its outside walls bleeding with damp, its windows dark, its high, cold rooms devoid of life except as he would enter them only to encounter, going before him in the chilly chambers, the exhaled, ghostly haze of his own breath; that...deadliness, juxtaposed to the powerful vividness of its imagined opposite: anticipation—of a lit window, of a waiting presence, of a voice asking those simple, linking, engaging questions which absence inspires: "How are you?" "How did you fare?" "What was it like?"
- 4 Oh, the blanknesses of solitude....
- 5 He ought to get a dog, a lively, sensitive puppy he could rear to companionable habits; one that would accompany him on walks and ride beside him in the car, that would sleep next to his bed and wag him awake of a morning, a warm, affectionate, entertaining little dog. He pictured the creature: a smallish terrier, a brindled,¹ charming cairn or smoothcoated brown-and-white Jack Russell,² all spiff and prance and independence but ready ever for a petting. "Father Declan's little dog," mothers would say of it in a recommending way, meaning it wouldn't snap when their children stooped to pat it. "'Tis Father Declan's": assurance that it wouldn't forget itself and spot the carpet.... Was there anything written against a priest having a dog? For sure the Bishop didn't have one. Could he think of a sixtyish priest he knew who did? He couldn't; though Father Patrick Joyce in Galway kept a toothless, stiff, off-putting thing of a cat, a feature of parish-house life you'd be less surprised by in Galway than in Roonatellin, priests in Galway being laws unto themselves.... And of course, there was the obstacle of Mrs. Duggin, who "did" for him as hasty morning-cleaner and washer and (hastier) cook. (He'd try again hinting to her how much he'd appreciate a bit of noontime meat or fish not fried to the consistency of cement, or a veg not boiled to a rag's limpness.) Mrs. Duggin wouldn't take to a dog.... He could hear

her: “I’m hoovering³ *hairs*, Father, *dog* hairs,” tousling the thin of her own, her mouth dropped disapprovingly. “It’s not that I’m complaining of the work, the amount of it, but *dog* hairs—”

6 But must he forever give in to the Mrs. Duggins of the world? forever keep sublimating wishes? as he was this instant sublimating (*burying*, or trying to) the wish (he struck the word *desire*) to share with someone this singular-in-his-life, brilliantly prodigious, gallimaufry⁴ twenty-four-pound-ten-ounce day, the bodily fact of it residing in the car’s boot,⁵ causing now that worrisome, unhealthy, grinding sound the engine was making (or so, in his angler’s⁶ pride, he fancied the source of the noise to be)....

7 Innocent, the mere wishing of a mere wish.

From *The All of It* by Jeannette Haien. Copyright © 1986 by Jeannette Haien. Used by permission of HarperCollins Publishers.

1: brownish or tawny, with streaks of color

2: Cairn and Jack Russell are both breeds of terrier.

3: vacuuming

4: chaotic

5: trunk

6: fisher’s

3. Many works of literature feature a character who holds a secret that can have broader implications for that character or other characters. For example, such secrets may create conflict, provide a source of consolation, protect characters from reality, or allow one character to manipulate other characters.

Either from your own reading or from the list below, choose a work of fiction in which an important character holds a secret that affects that character's relationship with one or more other characters. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how the effect of the character's secret contributes to an interpretation of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation.
- Provide evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

American Spy

Angels in America

Another Country

As I Lay Dying

Atonement

The Awakening

Behold the Dreamers

The Color Purple

A Doll's House

East of Eden

The English Patient

Fabulation, or the Re-Education of Undine

Frankenstein

Great Expectations

The Great Gatsby

Homegoing

Jane Eyre

The Joy Luck Club

The Kite Runner

Like Water for Chocolate

Little Fires Everywhere

Macbeth

The Memory Keeper's Daughter

The Namesake

Passing

People of the Whale

The Picture of Dorian Gray

Pride and Prejudice

Rebecca

The Remains of the Day

The Scarlet Letter

Song of Solomon

The Sound of a Voice

Sula

Twelfth Night

Washington Black

The Women of Brewster Place

STOP

END OF EXAM