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AP English Language and English Literature Exam (Advanced Placement Exam)

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Questions 01-06 pertain to the following passage:

Macbeth, William Shakespeare
Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death.
Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

Question: 1

The doctrine evoked by this passage is

- A. Solipsism
- B. Nihilism
- C. Fatalism
- D. Fallibilism
- E. Determinism

Answer: B

Explanation:

The passage illustrates nihilism, the belief that life is meaningless and without purpose or intrinsic value. It evokes a feeling of despair at the perceived pointlessness of existence.

Solipsism is the belief that one's own mind is all that exists.

Fatalism assigns all of life's events to fate.

Fallibilism contends that all human knowledge could be mistaken (some contend that certainty about any knowledge is impossible).

Determinism states that every human event is causally determined by a chain of prior events,

Question: 2

The meter of the piece is

- A. Iambic trimeter
- B. Trochaic meter
- C. Anapestic meter
- D. Iambic pentameter

E. Pyrrhic meter

Answer: D

Explanation:

The piece is written in iambic pentameter. Iambic refers to a pattern of an unaccented syllable followed by an accented syllable (one set of this pattern is called a foot). Pentameter means that there are five consecutive feet (i.e., da DUM, da DIJM, da DUM, da DUM, da DUM).

Question: 3

Who is on the way to dusty death?

- A. Fools
- B. Yesterday
- C. The candle
- D. Macbeth
- E. The reader

Answer: A

Explanation:

"And all our yesterdays have lighted fools

The way to dusty death"

"For" is implied between lighted and fools. Shakespeare omitted it to preserve the meter of the line and because it is implied that "fools" is an indirect object.

Question: 4

Life is compared to all of the following except what?

- A. A candle
- B. A tale
- C. A shadow
- D. A stage
- E. Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow

Answer: D

Explanation:

The stage is presented as a venue where life is lived. "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow." A candle, a tale, and a shadow are compared to life in the excerpt.

Question: 5

Why is the player "poor?"

- A. He is an idiot.
- B. He is fretting.
- C. His life is meaningless.
- D. He can't speak
- E. He is omniscient.

Answer: C

Explanation:

Shakespeare's reference to the "poor player" on stage for his brief time illustrates the passage's overall nihilistic tone: life is meaningless, so pity the poor mortals who are living.

Question: 6

The two sections of the passage differ in which way?

- A. The first section reads smoothly; the second is choppy.
- B. The first section is melancholy; the second is hopeful.
- C. The first section is spoken by Macbeth, the second by his wife.
- D. The meter changes from the first section to the second.
- E. The first section refers to birth, the second to death.

Answer: A

Explanation:

The first section consists of multi-syllable words, soft consonants and vowels, The second section consists of more one-syllable words and hard consonants, perhaps indicating an evolution in thought by Macbeth as he speaks the passage (the entire passage is spoken by Macbeth in response to learning of his wife's death).

Questions 07-11 pertain to the following passage:

Emma, Jane Austen (1816)

"I have none of the usual inducements of women to marry. Were I to fall in love, indeed, it would be a different thing! but I never have been in love; it is not my way, or my nature; and I do not think I ever shall. And, without love, I am sure I should be a fool to change such a situation as mine.

Fortune I do not want; employment I do not want; consequence I do not want: I believe few married women are half as much mistress of their husband's house, as I am of Hartsfield; and never, never could I expect to be so truly beloved and important; so always first and always right in any man's eyes as I am in my father's."

"But then, to be an old maid at last, like Miss Bates!"

"That is as formidable an image as you could present, Harriet; and if I thought I should ever be like Miss Bates! so silly—so satisfied—so smiling—so prosing—so undistinguishing and unfastidious—and so apt to tell everything relative to everybody about me, I would marry

tomorrow. But between us, I am convinced there never can be any likeness, except in being unmarried."

"But still, you will be an old maid! and that's so dreadful!"

"Never mind, Harriet, I shall not be a poor old maid; and it is poverty only which makes celibacy contemptible to a generous public! A single woman, with a very narrow income, must be a ridiculous, disagreeable, old maid! the proper sport of boys and girls; but a single woman, of good fortune, is always respectable, and may be as sensible and pleasant as anybody else. And the distinction is not quite so much against the candor and common sense of the world as appears at first, for a very narrow income has a tendency to contract the mind, and sour the temper. Those who can barely live, and who live perforce in a very small, and generally very inferior, society, may well be illiberal and cross.

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