

Sample Examination I

Section I

Questions 1-12. Refer to the following poem.

The Thief

Thou robst my days of business and delights,
Of sleep thou robst my nights;
Ah, lovely thief, what wilt thou do?
What, rob me of heaven too?
(5) Thou even my prayers dost steal from me;
And I with wild idolatry
Begin, to God, and end them all to thee.

Is it a sin to love, that it should thus
Like an ill conscience torture us?
(10) Whate'er I do, where'er I go
(None guiltless e'er was haunted so),
Still, still methinks thy face I view,
And still thy shape does me pursue,
As if, not you me, but I had murdered you.

(15) From books I strive some remedy to take,
But thy name all the letters make;
Whate'er 'tis writ, I find that there,
Like points and commas everywhere.
Me blest for this let no man hold;
(20) For I, as Midas did of old,
Perish by turning everything to gold.

What do I seek, alas, or why do I
Attempt in vain from thee to fly?
For, making thee my deity,
(25) I gave thee then ubiquity.
My pains resemble hell in this:
The divine presence there too is,
But to torment men, not to give them bliss.

—Abraham Cowley

1. The "thief" in the poem is the speaker's

- (A) death
- (B) age
- (C) conscience
- (D) beloved
- (E) anxiety

2. According to the speaker, the "thief" in the poem does all of the following EXCEPT

- (A) disrupt his concentration
- (B) deprive him of rest
- (C) jeopardize his salvation
- (D) plague his conscience
- (E) make him ponder suicide

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3. The primary dilemma confronting the speaker is his
- (A) considerable loss of income
 - (B) deleterious attraction to his beloved
 - (C) precipitous decline in health
 - (D) easy distraction from his studies
 - (E) misdirected faith
4. The speaker questions all of the following EXCEPT
- (A) the thief's designs on his soul
 - (B) the thief's mental cruelty
 - (C) his own level of culpability
 - (D) his attempts to find a solution in books
 - (E) the wisdom of his attempted flight
5. In the second stanza, the speaker emphasizes the extent of his torment through all of the following EXCEPT
- (A) simile
 - (B) repetition
 - (C) parenthetical comment
 - (D) irony
 - (E) metonymy
6. Lines 10-14 and 15-18 are primarily intended to bring out what aspect of the thief's nature?
- (A) her omnipresence
 - (B) her stealth
 - (C) her ruthlessness
 - (D) her illiteracy
 - (E) her desperation
7. The speaker's allusion to Midas (lines 20-21) emphasizes his own
- (A) material obsession
 - (B) intolerable hubris
 - (C) myopic foolhardiness
 - (D) advancing age
 - (E) unwarranted optimism
8. The word "ubiquity," as it is used in line 25, BEST interpreted as
- (A) omnipotence
 - (B) adulation
 - (C) guerdon
 - (D) fealty
 - (E) satisfaction
9. In which of the following lines does the speaker offer the strongest admonition to the reader?
- (A) line 5
 - (B) lines 8-9
 - (C) line 19
 - (D) lines 22-23
 - (E) line 26
10. All of the following may be considered highly ironic EXCEPT
- (A) the initial direction of the speaker's prayers and the ultimate recipient of these appeals
 - (B) the speaker's obsession with his beloved and his sense of being pursued.
 - (C) the deification of the speaker's beloved and the hellish torment he claims to be experiencing
 - (D) the willing submission of the speaker to his beloved and the emotional dominion she exacts
 - (E) the title of the poem and the alleged actions of the speaker's beloved
11. Which of the following is NOT characteristic of the poet's style?
- (A) the use of a central conceit to develop the poem's theme
 - (B) irregular lines of predominantly iambic rhythm
 - (C) rhetorical questions that reflect the speaker's acute frustration
 - (D) highly imagistic descriptions of suffering
 - (E) religious diction

12. The tone of the poem is BEST classified as

- (A) nostalgic
- (B) exasperated
- (C) reverential
- (D) vindictive
- (E) defiant

Questions 13-24. Refer to the following passage.

- (5) August, the month that bears fruit, closed around the shop and Pete and Fritzie left for Minnesota to escape the heat. A month running, Fleur had won thirty dollars and only Pete's presence had kept Lily at bay. But Pete was gone now, and one payday, with the heat so bad no one could move but Fleur, the men sat and played and waited while she finished work. The cards sweat, limp in their fingers, the table was slick with grease, and even the walls were warm to the touch. The air was motionless.
- (10) Fleur was in the next room boiling heads. Her green dress, drenched, wrapped her like a transparent sheet. A skin of lakeweed. Black snarls of veining clung to her arms. Her braids were loose, half unraveled, tied behind her neck in a thick loop. She stood in steam, turning skulls through a vat with a wooden paddle. When scraps boiled to the surface, she bent with a round tin sieve and scooped them out. She'd filled two dishpans.
- (15) "Ain't that enough now?" called Lily. "We're waiting." The stump of a dog trembled in his lap, alive with rage. It never smelled me or noticed me above Fleur's smoky skin. The air was heavy in the corner, and pressed Russell and me down.
- (20) Fleur sat with the men.
- (25) "Now what do you say?" Lily asked the dog. It barked. That was the signal for the real game to start.
- (30) "Let's up the ante," said Lily, who had been stalking this night for weeks. He had a roll of money in his pocket. Fleur had five bills in her dress. Each man had saved his full pay that the bank officer had drawn from the Kozkas' account.
- (35) "Ante a dollar then," said Fleur, and pitched hers in. She lost, but they let her scrape along, a cent at a time. And then she won some. She played unevenly, as if chance were all she had. She reeled them in. The game went on. The dog was stiff now, poised on Lily's knees, a ball of vicious muscle with its yellow eyes slit in concentration. It gave advice, seemed to sniff the lay of Fleur's cards, twitched and nudged. Fleur was up, then down, saved by a scratch. Tor dealt seven cards, three down. The pot grew, round by round, until it held all the money. Nobody folded. Then

- (55) it all rode on one last card and they went silent. Fleur picked hers up and drew a long breath. The heat lowered like a bell. Her card shook, but she stayed in.
- (60) Lily smiled and took the dog's head tenderly between his palms.
- (65) "Say Fatso," he said, crooning the words. "You reckon that girl's bluffing?" The dog whined and Lily laughed. "Me too," he said. "Let's show." He tossed his bills and coins into the pot and then they turned their cards over.
- (70) Lily looked once, looked again, then he squeezed the dog like a fist of dough and slammed it on the table.
- (75) Fleur threw out her arms and swept the money close, grinning that same wolf grin that she'd used on me, the grin that had jammed the bills inside her dress. She scooped the coins in waxed white paper that she tied with string.
- (80) "Another round," said Lily, his voice choked with burrs. But Fleur opened her mouth and yawned, then walked out back to gather slops for the big hog that was waiting in the stockpen to be killed.

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13. The atmosphere in the room in which the card game is played is BEST described by
- (A) claustrophobic
(B) bellicose
(C) sultry
(D) frenzied
(E) lascivious
14. The events that take place are best recounted by
- (A) Lily
(B) Fleur
(C) Tor
(D) an unidentified youth
(E) an omniscient narrator

15. The oppressive heat causes all of the following EXCEPT
- (A) the playing cards to become slick
 - (B) the air to become stagnant
 - (C) Fleur's dress to become diaphanous
 - (D) Lily to become impatient
 - (E) the other players to become irritable
16. The narrator implies which of the following about Fleur?
- (A) That she has cheated the other players.
 - (B) That she is reluctant to give them an opportunity to recoup their losses.
 - (C) That she has only experienced "beginner's luck."
 - (D) That she lures the men into a more risky wager.
 - (E) That she is being victimized by more experienced card sharks.
17. Lines such as "Let's up the ante" (line 34) and "Let's show" (line 63) are likely intended to convey Lily's
- (A) growing annoyance at Fleur's procrastination in the kitchen
 - (B) brash confidence that he will win back his losses
 - (C) reckless disregard for money
 - (D) desperate need to win a big hand
 - (E) impatient desire to bring the game to an end
18. The author mirrors Lily's changing fortunes and attitude through which of the following?
- I. The demeanor and body language of his dog.
 - II. The changing size of the pot on the table.
 - III. The facial expressions of the other card players.
- (A) I only
 - (B) III only
 - (C) I and II
 - (D) II and III
 - (E) I, II and III
19. The narrator likely describes Lily's voice as "choked with burrs" (line 76) to illustrate his
- (A) dehydration
 - (B) stuttering
 - (C) moroseness
 - (D) resignation
 - (E) ire
20. Which of the following pairs of words captures the impression of Fleur that the author MOST wishes to convey to the reader?
- (A) sensual and seductive
 - (B) dutiful and hardworking
 - (C) cunning and conniving
 - (D) outcast and exploited
 - (E) selfish and avaricious
21. The author draws an ironic and incongruous connection between the two principal characters in the episode through which of the following?
- (A) their attire
 - (B) their names
 - (C) their expressions
 - (D) their thought
 - (E) their dialogue
22. The passage subtly intimates which of the following?
- I. That after collecting her winnings Fleur will resign from her arduous job.
 - II. That the "real game" (line 33) does not necessarily involve card-playing.
 - III. That, as a result of her winning, Fleur may be a victim of violence.
- (A) I only
 - (B) III only
 - (C) I and II
 - (D) II and III
 - (E) I, II and III

23. Which of the following demonstrates the literary device known as synaesthesia?
- (A) "the table was slick with grease [. . .]" (lines 10-11)
 - (B) "A skin of lakeweed." (lines 15-16)
 - (C) "The air was heavy in the corner, and pressed Russell and me down." (lines 28-29)
 - (D) "a ball of vicious muscle, with its yellow eyes slit in concentration." (lines 46-48)
 - (E) "The heat lowered like a bell." (line 56)

24. Which of the following is NOT characteristic of the author's style?
- (A) predominantly simple sentences whose brevity augments the episode's tension
 - (B) the delineation of the dog as an integral character
 - (C) descriptions of physical actions that reflect the antithetical emotions of Lily and Fleur
 - (D) a modicum of dialogue
 - (E) ubiquitous symbols of imminent death

Questions 25-39. Refer to the following poem.

After The Last Practice
(Grinnell, Iowa, November 1971)

Someone said, I remember the first hard crack
Of shoulderpads on the sidelines before a game,
And the bruises that blossom on your arms
afterward.

Someone else remembered the faint, medicinal
smell

- (5) Seeping through the locker room on Saturday
mornings,
Getting your ankles taped while a halfback

Frets in the whirlpool about his hamstrings:
Steam on three mirrors, the nervous hiss
Of the first hot shower of the morning.

- (10) We talked about the tension mounting all day
Until it became the sound of spikes clattering
Across the locker room floor, the low banter

Of the last players pulling on their jerseys,
Our middle-linebacker humming to himself
(15) And hammering a forearm against the lockers
While an assistant coach diagrammed a punt
Return for the umpteenth time on his clipboard
For two cornerbacks looking on in boredom...

- Eventually, it always came down to a few words
(20) From the head coach—quiet, focused, intense—
While a huge pit opened up in your stomach
And the steady buzz of a crowd in the distance
Turned into a minor roaring in your skull
As the team exploded onto the field.

- (25) The jitters never disappeared until the opening
Kickoff, the first contact, until a body
Hurtled down the field in a fury
And threw itself against your body
While everything else in the world faded
(30) Before the crunching action of a play, unfolding...

I remember how, as we talked, the flat Midwestern
Fields stretched away into nowhere and nothing,
How the dark sky clouded over like a dome
Covering a chilly afternoon in late November

- (35) On the prairie, the scent of pine cones
And crisp leaves burning in the air,

The smoky glow of faces around a small fire.
Someone spoke of road trips and bridge games
In the back of a bus rolling across the plains,

- (40) Wooden fence posts ticking off the miles
And miles of empty cornfields and shortgrasses,
Windmills treading their arms, as if underwater,

- The first orange lights rising on the horizon—
Jesus, someone said, I never thought it would end
(45) Like this, without pads, without hitting anybody.
But then someone mentioned stepping out of bounds
And getting blindsided by a bone-wrenching tackle;
Someone else remembered writhing in a pile

- Of players coming down on his twisted body.
(50) Torn ligaments. Sprained wrist. A black coin
Blooming under your left eye on Sunday morning.
After all those years of drills and double practices,
Seasons of calisthenics, weightrooms, coaches
Barking orders—missed blocks, squirming fumbles—;

- (55) After all those summers of trying to perfect
A sideline pass and a button hook, a fly, a flag,
A deep post, a quick pass across the middle;
After the broken patterns and failed double teams,
The July nights sprinting up the stadium stairs
(60) And the August days banging against each other's bodies,

The slow walks home alone in the dusky light—;
After all those injury-prone autumns, not
One of us could explain why he had done it.
What use now is the language of traps

- (65) And draws, of power sweeps and desperate on-side
Kicks, of screen passes, double reverses?

But still there was the memory of a sharp cut
Into the open and the pigskin spiraling
Into your hands from twenty yards away,

- (70) The ecstasy of breaking loose from a tackle
And romping for daylight, for the green
Promised land of the endzone.

Someone said, I remember running into the field
And seeing my girlfriend in the stands at midfield—

- (75) Everyone around her was chanting and shouting
And the adrenaline was coursing through my body;
I felt as if I would explode with happiness,
As if I would never falter, waver, or die...

Someone else recollected the endless, losing,
(80) Thirteen-hour drive home after he had bruised
A collarbone on the last play of the game,
The whole bus encased in silence, like a glass
Jar, like the night itself, clarified. Afterward,
He recalled the wild joy of his first interception...

- (85) The fire sputtered and smoldered, faded out,
And our voices trembled in the ghostly woodsmoke
Until it seemed as if we were partly warriors
And partly Boy Scouts ringed around the flame,
Holding our helmets in our arms and trying
(90) To understand an old appetite for glory,
Our raging, innocent, violent, American
Boyhoods gone now, vanished forever
Like the victories and the hard losses.
It was late. A deep silence descended
(95) As twilight disintegrated in the night air
And the fire glowered down to embers and ashes,
To red bits of nothing. But no one moved. Oh,
We were burning, burning, burning, burning...
And then someone began singing in the darkness.

—Edward Hirsch

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25. The main focus of the poem involves the
(A) enduring legacy of athletic triumph
(B) fleeting nature of youth and glory
(C) inordinate cruelty of coaches
(D) physical betrayal of the body
(E) idyllic nature of small-town America
26. The tone of the poem is BEST labeled
(A) melancholy
(B) quizzical
(C) vindictive
(D) reflective
(E) nostalgic
27. All of the following help to reinforce the sensory nature of the first two stanzas EXCEPT
(A) "first hard crack / Of shoulderpads on the sidelines [. . .]" (lines 1-2)
(B) "bruises that blossom on your arms [. . .]" (line 3)
(C) "faint, medicinal smell / Seeping through the locker room on Saturday mornings [. . .]" (lines 4-5)
(D) "the nervous hiss / Of the first hot shower [. . .]" (lines 8-9)
(E) "the tension mounting all day [. . .]" (line 10)
28. The most common feeling displayed by the players *before* the contest is
(A) belligerence
(B) apprehension
(C) impatience
(D) pride
(E) tedium

29. The sixth and seventh stanzas of the poem (lines 31-42) do which of the following?
- Provide a measure of local color by introducing the reader to a specific geographical setting.
 - Imagistically reinforce the friends' enduring camaraderie.
 - Symbolically mirror the teammates' vanishing youth.
- I only
 - II only
 - I and III
 - II and III
 - I, II and III
30. Lines 44-45—"Jesus, someone said, I never thought it would end / Like this, without pads, without hitting anybody"—are primarily intended to
- intimate subtly that the players' adult lives have been anticlimactic
 - bemoan the brevity of adolescence
 - divorce one individual from his former teammates
 - trigger the subsequent flashbacks of gridiron heroism
 - deny the reality of a particularly depressing loss
31. The memories presented in lines 46-61
- celebrate individual character and toughness
 - acknowledge the temporal sacrifices demanded by sport
 - confirm the virtues of hard work and self-discipline
 - censure the dirty tactics of opponents
 - mask the disappointing realities of their post-adolescent lives
32. The diction and imagery in stanzas twelve and thirteen (lines 67-78) are suggestive of all of the following EXCEPT
- youth and freedom
 - heroism and celebrity
 - perfection and accomplishment
 - transience and mortality
 - jubilant and romance
33. The Boy Scout-warrior dichotomy, mentioned in lines 87-88, reinforces which of the following contrasts?
- corruption and innocence
 - youth and maturity
 - fear and courage
 - strength and weakness
 - responsibility and freedom
34. The speaker's comment that they were all "burning, burning, etc" (line 98) may plausibly be interpreted as which of the following?
- Desiring to be young again.
 - Rapidly passing into insignificance.
 - Becoming irate over their lost youth.
- I only
 - III only
 - I and II
 - I and III
 - I, II and III
35. Which of the following contributes LEAST to the contemplative mood of the last three stanzas?
- the onomatopoeic nature of the word "sputtered" (line 85)
 - the comparison "as if we were partly warriors / And partly Boy Scouts [. . .]" (lines 87-88)
 - the short declarative sentences "It was late" (line 94) and "But no one moved" (line 97)
 - the alliterative diction of "A deep silence descended / As twilight disintegrated [. . .]" (lines 94-95)
 - the fire's "glower[ing] down to embers and ashes [. . .]" (line 96)

36. In the course of the poem, the poet uses simile to depict each of the following EXCEPT
- the sky's manifestation of approaching winter
 - the sluggish motion of the windmills
 - the facial bruises that were the by-product of practice
 - the oppressive quiet after a defeat
 - the ephemeral nature of adolescent sport
37. When one considers the context in which it appears, which of the following is NOT intended to contribute to the transitory nature of the teammates' adolescent athletic experiences?
- "The smoky glow of faces around a small fire." (line 37)
 - "Jesus, someone said, I never thought it would end / Like this, without pads, without hitting anybody." (lines 44-45)
 - "What use now is the language of traps / And draws, of power sweeps and desperate on-side / Kicks, of screen passes, double reverses?" (lines 64-66)
 - "Holding our helmets in our arms and trying / To understand an old appetite for glory [. . .]" (lines 89-90)
 - "Oh, / We were burning, burning, burning, burning [. . .]" (lines 97-98)
38. Which of the following mirrors the diminishing significance of the individuals and their exploits on the football field?
- The ambiguity and inconsistency of their recollections.
 - The poet's use of indefinite personal pronouns in lieu of names.
 - The symbol of the sputtering and smoldering fire.
- I only
 - II only
 - I and II
 - II and III
 - I, II and III
39. All of the following are stylistic traits of the poem EXCEPT
- a shifting narrative perspective
 - the technical terminology of football
 - a catalog of ritualistic pre-game preparation
 - a contrast between youth and infirmity
 - free verse couched in a structured stanzaic pattern

Questions 40-51. Refer to the following passage.

- For a man to write well there are required three necessities—to read the best authors, observe the best speakers, and much exercise of his own style. In style, to consider what ought to be written, and after what manner, he must first think and excogitate his matter, then choose his words and examine the weight of either.
- (5) Then take care, in placing and ranking both matter and words, that the composition be comely; and to do this with diligence and often. No matter how slow the style be at first, so it be labored and accurate; seek the best and be not glad of the forward conceits or first words that offer themselves to us, but judge of what we invent, and order what we approve. Repeat often what we have formerly written; which beside that it helps the consequence, and makes the juncture better, it quickens the heat of imagination, that often cools in the time of setting down, and gives it new strength, as if it grew lustier by the going back. As we see in the contention of leaping, they jump farthest that fetch their race largest; or, as in throwing a dart or javelin, we force back our arms to make our loose the stronger. Yet, if we have a fair gale of wind, I forbid not the steering out of our sail, so the favor of the gale deceive us not. For all that we invent doth please us in the conception of our birth, else we would never set it down. But the safest is to return to our judgment, and handle over again those things the easiness of which might make them justly suspected. So did the best writers in their beginnings; they imposed upon themselves care and industry; they did nothing rashly; they obtained first to write well, and then custom made it easy and a habit. By little and little their matter showed itself to them more plentifully; their words answered, their composition followed; and all, as in a well-ordered family, presented itself in the place. So that the sum of all is, ready writing makes not good writing, but good writing brings on ready writing. Yet, when we think we have got the faculty, it is even then good to resist it, as to give a horse a check sometimes with a bit, which doth not so much stop his course as stir his mettle. Again, whither a man's genius is best able to reach, thither it should more and more contend, lift and dilate itself; as men of low stature raise themselves on their toes, and so oft-times get even, if not eminent. Besides, as it is fit for grown and able writers to stand of themselves, and work with their own strength, to trust and endeavor by their own faculties, so it is fit for the beginner and learner to study others and the best. For the mind and memory are more sharply exercised in comprehending another man's things than our own; and such as accustom themselves and are familiar with the best authors shall ever and anon find somewhat of them in themselves, and in the expression of their minds, even when they feel it not, be able to utter something like theirs, which hath an authority above their own. Nay, sometimes it is the reward of a man's study, the praise of quoting another man fitly; and though a man be more prone and able for one kind of writing than another, yet he must exercise all. For as in an instrument, so in style, there must be harmony and consent of parts.
- (10) (15) (20) (25) (30) (35) (40) (45) (50)
- (55) (60) (65) (70) (75)
40. The author's tone is BEST characterized as
- (A) highbrow
(B) reflective
(C) disparaging
(D) admonitory
(E) didactic
41. In advancing his argument the author makes use of all of the following EXCEPT
- (A) subtle sarcasm that reveals his disfavor of novice writers
(B) mild imperatives that offer counsel to his intended audience, writers
(C) analogous situations that buttress his point
(D) a paradox that underscores the relation between the disciplined writer and the quality of what he produces
(E) a collective "we" that hints at his own struggles with mastering the craft of writing

42. The allusions to jumping and javelin throwing in lines 23-27 are primarily intended to buttress the author's conviction about the importance of
- pondering the choice of subject matter
 - repeating what one has previously written to strengthen it
 - practicing writing daily so as to improve one's craft
 - studying the form of another writer to refine one's own
 - trying something new and more challenging
43. Which of the following may safely be said about lines 28-30?
- They are an admonition against insufficiently thought out developments in the plot.
 - They seemingly contradict the author's earlier comment that "No matter how slow the style be at first, so it be labored and accurate [. . .]" (lines 12-13).
 - They reflect the author's concession that there may be moments when a writer must flow with his inspiration or rhythm.
- I only
 - II only
 - I and III
 - II and III
 - I, II and III
44. The simile couched in lines 47-51 warns writers against becoming
- hasty
 - overconfident
 - undisciplined
 - indolent
 - adamant
45. Lines 52-54, "Again, whither a man's genius is best able to reach, thither it should more and more contend [. . .]," suggest that when a writer is at the height of his creative powers he should
- be content with what he has accomplished
 - remember the common stock from which he has risen
 - begin to compare himself to more accomplished literary greats
 - be more daring in the scope and reach of his literary endeavors
 - bask in his newly acquired popularity
46. The author suggests that all writers—particularly novice ones—should "accustom themselves (line 65) to the best authors for which of the following reasons?
- To discover some part of themselves in a more established writer's voice or material.
 - To expose themselves to other styles and genres of writing.
 - To utilize these authors' works as exemplars they might imitate.
- I only
 - II only
 - I and III
 - II and III
 - I, II and III
47. Which of the following does NOT paraphrase advice given by Jonson as to how best to effect good writing?
- Determine both the subject of your writing and the best form in which to express it.
 - Take care to find the most appropriate words even if it is an extremely deliberate process.
 - Establish your own, unique style that has not been influenced by writers who have come before you.
 - Reflect upon your initial inspirations to insure that they are as good as you initially considered them.
 - Be humble about your accomplishments so you are not seduced by your own genius.

48. In the course of his essay, the author draws comparisons to all of the following EXCEPT
- (A) athletic competition
 - (B) government
 - (C) horseback riding
 - (D) sailing
 - (E) music
49. In light of the context in which each word is embedded, which of the following would be the LEAST suitable replacement for one of the archaisms listed below?
- (A) "ponder" for "excogitate" (line 7)
 - (B) "common" for "forward" (line 14)
 - (C) "release" for "loose" (line 27)
 - (D) "aspired" for "obtained" (line 39)
 - (E) "spontaneous" for "ready" (lines 45 and 47)
50. Ironically, a purist might find Jonson's opening sentence to be marred by which of the following?
- (A) faulty parallelism
 - (B) a misnomer
 - (C) a dangling participle
 - (D) comma splice
 - (E) misplaced modifiers
51. The passage ultimately makes what point about professional writers?
- (A) They are born, not made.
 - (B) They hone their craft by degrees.
 - (C) They regularly mimic the work of their peers.
 - (D) They remain insecure about their abilities.
 - (E) They give little thought to the relation between style and subject.