

**English Literature, 1991 Exam  
Answer Section**

**MULTIPLE CHOICE**

1. ANS: D

1. The objective viewpoint in this passage from Don DeLillo's *White Noise* identifies the speaker as a resident of the town. He speaks of witnessing this event every September for twenty-one years which eliminates choices A, B, and E. A student, parent of a student, and returning college graduate would not be witnessing this "spectacle" for consecutive years. Only distracter E has some logical connection as a "returning college graduate," but is not the best answer choice considering that the speaker has "witnessed...every September for twenty-one years. The closing sentence tells the reader that the parents are "a collection of the like-minded and the spiritually akin, a people, a nation" which implies their superior attitudes over the townspeople.

PTS: 1                      DIF: Easy                      MSC: 93% answered correctly  
NOT: 1991 #1

2. ANS: B

2. The choices of C, D, and E can be eliminated because none of these descriptions are in the passage. Only what the station wagons contain in material items characterizes the students as obviously having access to financial resources. But having access does not identify their attitudes about their possessions, or choice A. The second paragraph reasons that the wealth resulting in some need to buy possessions for college because the parents see a "communal" recognition of tanned faces and wry (incredible) looks and "something about them suggesting massive insurance coverage." Ninety-nine percent of the students understood this question.

PTS: 1                      DIF: Easy                      MSC: 99% answered correctly  
NOT: 1991 #2

3. ANS: C

3. From line 4 until line 10, one sentence is a list of what students can't live without; all secured on the roof of the station wagons. After the students "sprang out" of the vehicles (line 11) they begin to remove another huge list (line 12) of more personal items, play equipment, and junk food until the end of the paragraph. All is in factual reporting of a list, making choice C, lists, the best answer. Hyperbole, puns, and euphemism are not in the list. These items are concrete, not abstract ideas or thoughts.

PTS: 1                      DIF: Easy                      MSC: 93% answered correctly  
NOT: 1991 #3

4. ANS: C

4. This question challenged forty percent of the students. The items are arranged from those on the roof and inside the station wagon. Those on the roof are too large to go into the extended back of the car. The larger suitcases and boxes that contain smaller objects had to go on the roof with the bicycles, skis, and rucksacks, saddles, and rafts. The objects inside are smaller and more fragile including a “small” refrigerator along with the hair dryers, cassettes, styling irons, etc. Finally, “the controlled substances and junk food” are listed down to fruit chews and toffee popcorn and Dum-Dum pops, even mints. The correct answer of large to small (C) explains this tool of organization for writing the paragraph. Considering the list as a whole, the items are not old to new, masculine to feminine, familiar to exotic or personal to impersonal. The boxes and suitcases are large even though they contain many small items.

PTS: 1                      DIF: Medium                      MSC: 40% answered correctly  
NOT: 1991 #4

5. ANS: A

5. In rhetorical analysis the “context” of a passage is a very important consideration. This parade of station wagons that occurs every fall is “a brilliant event,” as stated in line 23 for a connotative use of the word. Remember, speakers have to consider how to approach their subjects, what evidence to provide (in this passage—listing details) and how to connect with the audience. Context is the occasion or the time and place it was written with the purpose that the speaker wants to achieve. The speaker is calling this brilliant as in brilliant sunshine or brilliant smile where someone else might call it dazzling or amazing all synonyms for the same word, choice A. This speaker is using it as imposingly splendid or magnificent with sarcasm, especially tied to the closing word of that sentence “invariably.” If the context changed to another event the connotation of brilliant could mean choice B, scholarly. Important, honorable, or unique are not supported anywhere in the passage.

PTS: 1                      DIF: Medium                      MSC: 55% answered correctly  
NOT: 1991 #5

6. ANS: E

6. Question 6 is a “time bandit” in that the student spends too much time going back to check each of I, II, and III statements instead of seeing this type of question as a simple true/false or yes/no response from the initial reading. Since only 36% answered this question correctly the distracters of I only, II only, I and III only, and II and III worked well but caused the confusion. “Invariably” and “as always” are ordinary vocabulary words that apply to all three statements: characterize the speaker as an experienced observer, give continuity to the concluding paragraph, and provide a comment on the description in the first paragraph. The answer E is the only choice that lists I, II, and III.

PTS: 1                      DIF: Hard                      MSC: 36% answered correctly  
NOT: 1991 #6

7. ANS: D

7. This question has the same analysis process as the previous question. Parents in the stem of the question are characterized as I, II, and III or as socially, physically, and financially similar. The townspeople did not state or imply any intellectual achievements or endeavors of the parents or mention any of the students—not even the SAT scores reported for admissions. The speaker describes their like-mindedness, both supporting and implying that they all had the same type of social contacts, physical characteristics, and bank accounts, leaving out any suggestion of attending the college for intellectual growth.

PTS: 1                      DIF: Medium                      MSC: 42% answered correctly

NOT: 1991 #7

8. ANS: C

8. Please remember that the examiner has to address the elements of literature and stay within the passage chosen, restricting the type of questions that can be asked. Both questions 7 and 8 address the element of characterization. Question 7's choices, called distracters, already give the labels of social, physical, and financial which quickly identifies the answer for question 8 as "C." This question is asking for the "implications about the nature of their lives" and gives the additional information as being intellectually unconcerned. They are involved with their kids just for the planning for this big event in their lives "as important to be seen in the right crowd." The choices for A, D and E are not in the passage leaving a weak possibility for B easily eliminated because of a lack of any identifiable "descriptive terms" used.

PTS: 1                      DIF: Medium                      MSC: 65% answered correctly

NOT: 1991 #8

9. ANS: E

9. The speaker's purpose in this paragraph focuses us on the parents' superiority and expectation to be part of the social event ritual. The subject turns from the students in a few short lines to the parents (line 26) and is used as the antecedent with the continual use of the pronouns "they" and "their" in descriptions referring to them. In line 37 the speaker uses the word "parents" as the object of the verb "tells" that validates for the parents their position of social self-importance to this annual event. Choice "D" verifies for the parents that this event is more important than even the parenthetical "liturgies or laws." Have the students use the testing technique of substituting the words in choices A, B, and C to see that the sentence no longer coheres or makes sense as in "more than anything [station wagons or people's names] might do in the course of the year."

PTS: 1                      DIF: Medium                      MSC: 59% answered correctly

NOT: 1991 #9

10. ANS: E

10. The purpose of the passage and focus of this question is to contrast the parents' smug views and the speaker's disapproval of them, choice E. In the second paragraph, youth and age, or choice A, is not the focus or purpose of the speaker. Since education could be founded on democratic idealism and contrasted to worldly possessions, choice B, is a fair distracter or possible choice of the speaker's. Already established in earlier questions, academic success and activities, choice C, are not mentioned anywhere in the passage. Choice D, the speaker's sophistication is neither relevant nor contrasted to anything the students say and would be the weak choice like youth and infirmity. The speaker is talking of the parents, and we infer his disapproval of them and "their event." The parents see "images of themselves in every direction" so democratic idealism or academic success is overshadowed and lost in the purpose of the speaker.

PTS: 1                      DIF: Hard                      MSC: 16% answered correctly

NOT: 1991 #10

11. ANS: A

11. The second paragraph has multiple references to the parents' attitudes about their social status with "a sense of renewal, of communal recognition..." by "knowing people's names" which they believe makes them "distinct but ungrudging, accomplished in parenthood" with "something about them suggesting massive insurance coverage." Again, choice C is the best response to characterizing the parents as shallow or superficial. This description shows the speaker's attitude toward them as condescending or contemptuous. The distracters are about what they are wearing or the numerous possessions stuffed into the wagons. Not once is there any interaction with others or their children, just a parade of parent social superiority.

PTS: 1                      DIF: Easy                      MSC: 76% answered correctly

NOT: 1991 #11

12. ANS: A

12. The primary rhetorical purpose of the passage is to characterize a group of people, choice A. The complexity of the speaker's purpose in narrating this event could suggest a defense of a certain life-style and the importance of various possessions, but the language of the speaker shows sarcasm by using words such as "spectacle" and "invariably." The passage begins with a list of what these families consider necessary to start the fall semester and becomes more specific about why they think these items are important. These are the necessary trappings for the social interaction of their children to "fit" into this select society where they belong: "a collection of the like-minded."

PTS: 1                      DIF: Easy                      MSC: 75% answered correctly

NOT: 1991 #12

13. ANS: A

13. The passage begins with a list of what these families consider necessary to start the fall semester and becomes—through the speaker—more generalized, choice A, or self-interested about why they think these items are important. The passage does not contain an illustration of an abstract idea; rather the whole passage becomes an illustration of the parents' intentions. The event is very orderly in appearance and no conflict takes place eliminating choices B, C, D, and E.

PTS: 1                      DIF: Medium                      MSC: 62% answered correctly

NOT: 1991 #13

14. ANS: C

14. The best choice for the speaker is C, an ironic commentator. He is narrating the event, not investigating it (choice D). He is neither a participant (E) because he “witnessed” this each year; nor a visitor (B) since he sees the annual event (B); nor a victim (A) since nothing actually happens to him in the passage.

PTS: 1                      DIF: Easy                      MSC: 67% answered correctly  
NOT: 1991 #14

15. ANS: D

15. The two most important syntactical arrangements in prose are the beginning and the concluding sentences. The controlled language and rhythm of the concluding sentence “a collection of the like-minded and the spiritually akin, a people, a nation” is a very shortened pacing for emphasis where the key point is near the period “a nation” for those who belong. If you compare this pacing to the opening sentence of “a long shining line that coursed through the west campus” is a looser construction with the modifiers after the independent and short key point “the station wagons arrived at noon.” The author starts with an event and ends with self-importance.

PTS: 1                      DIF: Hard                      MSC: 38% answered correctly  
NOT: 1991 #15