

ENGLISH 12

**EXAMINATION
SPECIFICATIONS**

SEPTEMBER 2004

Assessment Department

The information in this booklet is intended to be helpful for both teachers and students.
Teachers are encouraged to make this information available to all students.

ENGLISH 12

The intent of the *Examination Specifications* is to convey to the classroom teacher and student how the English 12 curriculum will be tested on the provincial examinations. The Table of Specifications provides mark weightings for each of the topics related to specific curriculum organizers as well as the cognitive levels that are applied to questions. A detailed description of examinable material within each curriculum organizer can be found in the English 12 curriculum section of the *English Language Arts 11 and 12 Integrated Resource Package (IRP), 1996* and in Appendix A (English 12 portion) of that package.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVINCIAL EXAMINATION

Replaces all previous versions of English 12 Examination Specifications.

1. The English 12 Provincial Examination is worth a total of 82 marks.
- 2.

EXAMINATION PART	MARKS	TIME
Part A: Informational Text	7 multiple choice	15 minutes
Part B: Poetry	7 multiple choice 12 written response (paragraph)	30 minutes
Part C: Literary Prose	8 multiple choice 24 for written response (essay)	40 minutes
Part D: Composition	24 for composition	35 minutes
Total marks and minutes	82 marks	120 minutes

This examination is designed to be completed in **two hours**. *Students may, however, take up to 30 minutes of additional time to finish.*

3. Part A: Informational Text has a short passage with seven multiple-choice questions.
4. Part C: Prose contains an amended instruction in the Instruction Box.
5. Part D: Original Composition contains an amended instruction in the Instruction Box.
6. Minor changes have been made to the holistic scoring guides for poetry, prose, and original composition.
7. It should be noted that electronic devices, including dictionaries and pagers, are **not** permitted in the examination room.

It is expected that there will be a difference between school marks and provincial examination marks for individual students. Some students perform better on classroom tests and others on provincial examinations. School assessment measures performance on all curricular outcomes, whereas provincial examinations may only evaluate performance on a sample of these outcomes.

The provincial examination represents 40% of the student's final letter grade and the classroom mark represents 60%.

Acknowledgement

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DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVINCIAL EXAMINATION

The Table of Specifications (page 3) outlines the topics and the cognitive level emphases covered on the provincial examination. A detailed description of examinable material is found in the *English Language Arts 11 and 12 Integrated Resource Package, 1996*.

This examination is designed to be completed in **two hours**. *Students may, however, take up to 30 minutes of additional time to finish.*

The provincial examination is divided into **four** parts:

PART A: Informational Text

- Multiple-choice questions worth a total of 7 marks.

In interpreting informational text, the student will be expected to demonstrate comprehension at the literal, inferential and critical levels. Students should be able to recognize bias, interpret purpose, and determine tone in a given piece of informational text. In addition, students should be able to identify and analyze ways of manipulating language to create a desired effect such as presenting information, developing an argument, and supporting a thesis. Furthermore, the student will be expected to differentiate both between subjective and objective language, and fact and opinion. Students will be asked to identify stylistic and persuasive techniques used by writers to achieve their purpose. The informational text may include supporting graphics and discontinuous text.

PARTS B and C: Interpretation of Literature

Students should be able to analyze and interpret selections of poetry and prose. They should demonstrate the strategies and skills of reading comprehension at the literal, inferential and critical levels. In interpreting a selection of poetry or prose, students should be able to demonstrate an understanding of the terms and devices relevant to the discussion of the work and be able to support a position, interpretation, or response by citing specific details, features and information from the poem or passage.

Part B: Poetry

- Multiple-choice questions worth a total of 7 marks.
- Paragraph format written-response question worth 12 marks.

In answering the paragraph format written-response question, students should be able to develop (a) unified and coherent paragraph(s) of approximately 125 to 150 words. Paragraphs should be constructed with complete and effective sentences, and adhere to the conventions of standard written English. Students will be provided with only **one** question for response.

Part C: Prose

- Multiple-choice questions worth a total of 8 marks.
- Essay format written-response question worth 24 marks.

In answering the essay format written-response question, students should be able to develop a multi-paragraph answer of approximately 300 words. Essays should be constructed with complete and effective sentences and adhere to the conventions of standard written English. There will be a choice of **two** questions from which students will choose **one** for response.

PART D: Original Composition

- The original composition is worth 24 marks.

Students should be able to demonstrate the skills of written expression such as planning and organizing ideas, using effective transitions within and between sentences and paragraphs, constructing effective sentences, and using conventions of standard written English.

In writing a multi-paragraph original composition of approximately 300 words, students should be able to limit a topic, decide on their purpose and audience and present a thesis statement (if appropriate). They should be able to generate and shape their ideas, and write paragraphs using effective transitions, varied sentences, and suitable diction. They should also demonstrate an understanding of the conventions of standard written English by monitoring their own spelling, grammar, punctuation and syntax. Students should be able to maintain a focus on the topic while developing ideas to support their main idea and addressing the purpose of the topic.

In addressing the topic, students may apply any effective and appropriate method of development, including:

- personal, reflective, informative, persuasive and argumentative styles;
- narration, including use of first and third person;
- descriptive writing, including descriptions of characters, places, situations, events, etc., real or imaginary.

Students will be provided with **one** topic for response.

Note to Teachers: Written expression marks for the Original Composition and the Interpretation of Literature (Poetry and Prose) are awarded holistically. Holistic impressions do not place undue emphasis on any one writing error; i.e., misspellings, fragments, run-ons, misplaced modifiers, poor transitions, etc.

Remind students to use language and content appropriate to the purpose and audience of this examination. Failure to comply may result in the paper being awarded a zero.

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TABLE OF SPECIFICATIONS FOR THE PROVINCIAL EXAMINATION

CURRICULUM		EXAMINATION TOPICS	COGNITIVE LEVEL			TOTAL MARKS
ORGANIZERS	SUB-ORGANIZERS		Knowledge	Understanding and Application	Higher Mental Processes	
Comprehend and Respond	Strategies and Skills	A: Informational Text	3	4	—	7
Comprehend and Respond	Strategies and Skills	B: Interpretation of Literature: Poetry	4	←—— 15 ——→		19
	Comprehension		C: Interpretation of Literature: Prose	4	←—— 28 ——→	
	Engagement and Personal Response	Critical Analysis				
Communicate Ideas and Information	Knowledge of Language	D: Original Composition	—	←—— 24 ——→		24
	Composing and Creating					
	Improving Communications					
TOTAL MARKS						82

The values in this table are approximate and may fluctuate. Where values cross two cognitive levels, they may be entirely at one level or the other, or any combination of the two.

Examination configuration: 22 marks in multiple-choice format
60 marks in written-response format

DESCRIPTION OF COGNITIVE LEVELS

The following three cognitive levels are based on a modified version of Bloom's taxonomy (Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, Bloom et al., 1956). Bloom's taxonomy describes six cognitive categories: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation. For ease of classification, the six cognitive categories have been collapsed into three.

Knowledge

Knowledge is defined as including those behaviors and test situations that emphasize the remembering, either by recognition or recall, of ideas, material, or phenomena. Incorporated at this level is knowledge of terminology, specific facts (dates, events, persons, etc.), conventions, classifications and categories, criteria, methods of inquiry, principles and generalizations, theories and structures.

Understanding and Application

Understanding refers to responses that represent a comprehension of the literal message contained in a communication. Literal comprehension means that the student is able to translate, interpret or extrapolate. Translation refers to the ability to put a communication into another language or other terms. Interpretation involves the reordering of ideas (inferences, generalizations, or summaries). Extrapolation includes estimating or predicting based on an understanding of trends or tendencies.

Application requires the student to apply an appropriate abstraction (theory, principle, idea, method) to a new situation.

Higher Mental Processes

Included at this thought level are the processes of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

Analysis involves the ability to recognize unstated assumptions, to distinguish facts from hypotheses, to distinguish conclusions from statements that support them, to recognize which facts or assumptions are essential to a main thesis or to the argument in support of that thesis, and to distinguish cause-effect relationships from other sequential relationships.

Synthesis involves the production of a unique communication, the ability to propose ways of testing hypotheses, the ability to design an experiment, the ability to formulate and modify hypotheses, and the ability to make generalizations.

Evaluation is defined as the making of judgments about the value of ideas, solutions, and methods. It involves the use of criteria as well as standards for appraising the extent to which details are accurate, effective, economical, or satisfying. Evaluation involves the ability to apply given criteria to judgments of work done, to indicate logical fallacies in arguments, and to compare major theories and generalizations.

Questions at the *higher mental processes* level subsume both *knowledge* and *understanding and application* levels.

SCORING GUIDE FOR POETRY (PART B)

This is a first-draft response and should be assessed as such.

6

The 6 response is superior and may draw upon any number of factors, such as an appreciation of the poem and an insightful discussion of the topic. The writing style is effective and demonstrates a sophisticated use of language. Despite its clarity and precision, the response need not be error-free.

5

The 5 response is proficient and reflects a strong grasp of the topic and the poem. The references to the poem may be explicit or implicit and convincingly support the discussion. The writing is well organized and reflects a strong command of the conventions of language. Errors may be present, but are not distracting.

4

The 4 response is competent. Understanding of the poem tends to be literal but rather superficial. The response may rely heavily on paraphrasing of the poem. References are present and appropriate, but may be limited to only part of the poem. The writing is organized and straightforward. Conventions of language are usually followed, but some errors are evident.

3

The 3 response is barely adequate. Understanding of the poem may be partially flawed or incomplete. Support may consist of long references to the poem which are not clearly connected to a central idea or may be meagre or repetitive. The response may show some sense of purpose, but errors may impede meaning.

2

The 2 response is inadequate. While there is an attempt to address the topic, there may be a misunderstanding of the task. Understanding of the poem is seriously flawed. Errors are recurring, distracting, and impede meaning.

1

The 1 response is unacceptable. The response does not meet the purpose of the task or may be too brief to address the topic. There is a serious lack of control in the writing which renders the paper, at times, unintelligible.

0*

The zero response reflects a complete misunderstanding of the poem and/or the task, is written in verse, is off-topic, or is a restatement of the question.

*Any zero paper must be cleared by the section leader.

NR

A blank paper with no response given.

SCORING GUIDE FOR PROSE (PART C)

This is a first-draft response and should be assessed as such. The use of paragraph structure is assessed holistically with reference to the clarity of expression and organization.

6

The 6 essay is superior and may draw upon any number of factors, such as depth of discussion, effectiveness of argument, or level of insight. This essay exhibits an effective writing style and a sophisticated use of language. Despite its clarity and precision, the response need not be error-free.

5

The 5 essay is proficient and reflects a strong grasp of the topic and the text. The references to the text may be explicit or implicit and convincingly support a thesis. The writing is well organized and demonstrates a strong command of the conventions of language. Errors may be present, but are not distracting.

4

The 4 essay is competent. The assertions in the four essay tend to be simplistic; there are no significant errors in understanding. References are present and appropriate, but may be limited to only part of the text. The writing is organized and straightforward. Conventions of language are usually followed, but some errors are evident.

3

The 3 essay is barely adequate. Understanding of the topic and/or the text may be partially flawed. Support may consist of long references to the text which are not clearly connected to a central idea or may be meagre or repetitive. The essay may show some sense of purpose, but errors may impede meaning.

2

The 2 essay is inadequate. Understanding of the topic or the text is seriously flawed. There may be a misunderstanding of the task. Errors are recurring, distracting, and impede meaning.

1

The 1 essay is unacceptable. The response does not meet the purpose of the task or may be too brief to address the topic. There is a serious lack of control in the writing which renders the paper, at times, unintelligible.

0*

The zero essay reflects a complete misunderstanding of the prose and/or the task, is written in verse, is off-topic, or is a restatement of the question.

*Any zero paper must be cleared by the section leader.

NR

A blank paper with no response given.

APPENDIX III: SCORING GUIDE FOR ORIGINAL COMPOSITION (PART D)

A composition may apply any effective and appropriate method of development which includes **any combination** of exposition, persuasion, description, and narration. No one form of writing should be considered superior to another. **This is a first-draft response and should be assessed as such.**

The use of paragraph structure is assessed holistically with reference to the clarity of expression and organization.

6

The 6 paper is superior and may draw upon any number of factors, such as maturity of style, depth of discussion, effectiveness of argument, use of literary and/or rhetorical devices, sophistication of wit, or quality of imagination. This composition exhibits an effective writing style and a sophisticated use of language. Despite its clarity and precision, this paper need not be error-free.

5

The 5 paper is proficient. The composition displays some manipulation of language to achieve a desired effect and exhibits a clear sense of voice and of audience. Content is thoughtful and interesting. Vocabulary and sentence structure are varied and serve the writer's purpose successfully. Errors may be present, but are not distracting.

4

The 4 paper is clearly adequate. The composition conveys the writer's ideas, but without flair or strong control. Diction and syntax are usually appropriate, but lack variety. Structure, regardless of type, is predictable and relatively mechanical. The paper shows a clear sense of the writer's purpose, but is not engaging. Conventions of language are usually followed, but some errors are evident.

3

The 3 paper is barely adequate. The paper may feature underdeveloped or simplistic ideas. Transition[s] may be weak or absent. Support is frequently in the form of listed details. Little variety in diction and sentence structure is discernible. The composition may reflect some sense of purpose, but errors may impede meaning.

2

The 2 paper is inadequate. The ideas are underdeveloped and simply or awkwardly expressed. The composition may be excessively colloquial or reflect inadequate knowledge of the conventions of language. While meaning is apparent, errors are frequent and rudimentary.

1

The 1 paper is unacceptable and may be so compromised by its deficiency of composition, content, diction, syntax, structure, voice and conventions of language as to render its meaning/purpose, at times, unintelligible.

0*

The zero paper manifests an achievement less than outlined in a scale-point one, is written in verse, is off-topic, or is a restatement of the topic.

*Any zero paper must be cleared by the section leader.

NR

A blank paper with no response given.

APPENDIX IV: KEY WORDS

Students frequently lose marks by not addressing the question as given. It is important for teachers to instruct their students in how to read questions and answer them in a fully-developed way. The following list of most frequently used “Key Words” will help teachers and students to read, analyze and respond to written-response questions more effectively. When markers evaluate answers to questions using these words, they generally have the following definitions in mind:

AGREE OR DISAGREE	Support or contradict a statement; give the positive or negative features; express an informed opinion one way or the other; list the advantages for or against.
ASSESS	Estimate the value of something based on some criteria; present an informed judgment. Command words such as “assess” strongly suggest to the student that two schools of thought exist about a given subject. These questions often involve weighing the relative merit of conflicting points of view; e.g., negative vs. positive, strong vs. weak components, etc.
COMPARE	Give an estimate of the similarity of one event or issue to another; give an estimate of the relationship between two things. Often used in conjunction with CONTRAST.
CONTRAST	Give an estimate of the difference between two things. See COMPARE.
DESCRIBE	Give a detailed or graphic account of an object, event, or sequence of events.
DISCUSS	Present the various points of view in a debate or argument; write at length about a given subject; engage in written discourse on a particular topic.
EXPLAIN	Give an account of what the essence of something is, how it works, or why something is the way it is. This task may be accomplished by paraphrasing, providing reasons or examples, or by giving a step-by-step account.
IDENTIFY	Clearly establish the identity of something based on an understood set of considerations; recognize the unique qualities of something and state the criteria used to identify it; simply provide the name of something.
ILLUSTRATE	Give concrete examples to clarify a point or an idea.
LIST	Give a catalogue, in some specified order, of names, ideas, or things which belong to a particular class of items.
OUTLINE	Give a written description of only the main features; summarize the principal parts of a thing, an idea, or an event.
SHOW (THAT)	Give facts, reasons, illustrations or examples, to support an idea or proposition.
STATE	Give the key points with supporting reasons.
SUGGEST	Identify and propose; present viable alternatives, options and solutions.
SUPPORT	Defend or agree with a particular, predetermined point of view; give evidence, reasons, or examples.
TRACE	Outline the development; describe the specified sequence.

APPENDIX V: LIST OF TERMS

- active voice, allegory, alliteration, allusion, analogy, antagonist, anti-climax, antithesis, apostrophe, argumentative essay, anecdotal evidence, archaic language, aside, assonance, atmosphere, audience, autobiography
- ballad, ballad stanza, bias, biography, blank verse
- cacophony, caricature, case study, catastrophe, cause and effect, character, characterization, character foil, chorus, chronological order, cliché, climactic order, climax, coincidence, colloquialism, colloquial language, comedy, comic relief, compare and contrast, comparison, conflict, connotation, consonance, contrast, couplet
- denotation, dénouement, descriptive essay, dialect, dialogue, diary, diction, didactic, dilemma, direct presentation, dissonance, drama, dramatic irony, dramatic monologue, dramatic form, dynamic character
- editorial, elegy, emotional appeal, epic, epiphany, epigram, epitaph, euphemism, euphony, expert testimony, exposition, expository essay, extended metaphor, external conflict
- fable, falling action, fantasy, farce, figurative language, first person narrative point of view, flashback, flat character, foil, foreshadowing, form, formal essay, formal language, free verse
- genre, graphic text
- hero, historical reference, humour, hyperbole
- iambic pentameter, idiom, image, imagery, indeterminate ending, indirect presentation, informal essay, informal language, interior monologue, internal conflict, internal rhyme, irony
- jargon, juxtaposition
- legend, limited omniscient point of view, literal language, lyric
- melodrama, metaphor, metre, metonymy, monologue, mood, mystery, myth
- narrative, narration, narrator
- objective (language, tone, etc.), objective point of view, octave, ode, omniscient point of view, onomatopoeia, oxymoron
- paradox, parallelism, parody, passive voice, pastoral, pathos, personal essay, personification, persuasive essay, persuasive technique, plot, point of view, pro and con argument, prologue, propaganda, protagonist, proverb, purpose, pun
- quatrain, question and answer
- refrain, repetition, research, resolution, rhetorical question, rhyme, rhyme scheme, rhythm, rising action, round character
- sarcasm, satire, sestet, setting, simile, slang, soliloquy, sonnet, speaker, stanza, style, stream of consciousness, statistical evidence, static character, stereotype, stock / stereotyped character, style, stylistic technique, subjective (language, tone, etc.), surprise ending, suspense, symbol, symbolism, synecdoche
- theme, thesis, thesis statement, third person narrative, tone, tragedy
- understatement
- voice
- wit

TYPES OF READING PASSAGES

- one poem (or two shorter, related poems) drawn from any literary period
- short story
- essay (formal or informal styles)
- letters, newspaper columns, business communications, magazine articles, editorials, web pages, timelines
- drama
- novel
- non-fiction prose (such as diaries, journals, etc.)

Note: reading passages may be excerpts from longer works.

PART B: POETRY

Total Value: 19 marks

Suggested Time: 30 minutes

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the poem “Wordsmith,” on page 3 in the Readings Booklet. Select the **best** answer for each question and record your choice on the Response Form provided.

Wordsmith

by Susan Young

- 1 In my mind I call my
father the Pollyfilla¹ king,
watch with something akin to awe
as he begins the arduous process
5 of filling in the gaps, the long winded
cracks that travel down the walls of my house
like run on sentences.
- From the sidelines I watch as he
trudges up and down the stairs, carrying
10 with nonchalance an industrial-sized bucket,
shiny spatula tucked into back pocket
for easy access.
- Over and over again
with precision and grace
15 he fills and smooths and sands
as filling in all of the empty crevices
with the words he didn't know how to say,
the lost syllables and consonants springing up
from the bucket, stubbornly announcing themselves
20 home, until there is only smoothness,
my fifty eight year old house a perfect sentence,
- the veritable sheen of its walls
privy to this father of mine,
whose love keeps him moving
25 from room to room, brightly asking,
*Do you think you'll be painting the other room
upstairs sometime? I could start work on it now.
Then it'll be ready for painting later.*
Yes, I say, yes,
30 my face aglow.

¹Pollyfilla: a brand of substance to fill cracks in plaster walls

Understanding

8. What does the word “arduous” in line 4 imply about the task of repairing the house?
- A. It was simple.
 - * B. It was difficult.
 - C. It was annoying.
 - D. It was overwhelming.

Knowledge

9. Which sound device is contained in “with precision and grace” (line 14)?
- A. rhyme
 - * B. assonance
 - C. alliteration
 - D. onomatopoeia

Knowledge

10. What do the italics used in lines 26–29 indicate?
- A. thoughts
 - * B. dialogue
 - C. whispers
 - D. complaints

Understanding

11. What does “my face aglow” (line 30) suggest about the narrator?
- A. She is hot.
 - B. She is angry.
 - * C. She is thrilled.
 - D. She is embarrassed.

Understanding

12. Which word **best** describes the tone of the poem?

- * A. reflective
- B. sorrowful
- C. humorous
- D. indifferent

Understanding

13. What is the form of this poem?

- A. ballad
- B. sonnet
- * C. free verse
- D. blank verse

Wordsmith
(page 3 in the **Readings Booklet**)

INSTRUCTIONS: In paragraph form and in approximately **125 to 150 words**, answer question 1 in the space provided. Write in **ink**. The mark for your answer will be based on the appropriateness of the example(s) you use as well as the adequacy of your explanation and the quality of your written expression.

Higher Mental Process

1. In paragraph form and with reference to the poem, discuss how the maintenance of the house acts as a metaphor for the relationship between the father and the daughter. **(12 marks)**

PART C: PROSE

Total Value: 32 marks

Suggested Time: 40 minutes

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the story entitled “Circus in Town,” on pages 4 to 6 in the **Readings Booklet**. Select the **best** answer for each question and record your choice on the Response Form provided.

Canadian author, Sinclair Ross, was writing during the Depression era in the 1930's. In his fiction, he reveals the difficulties of farming life on the prairies.

adapted from **Circus in Town**

by Sinclair Ross

- 1 It was Jenny's first circus. A girl in purple tights, erect on a galloping horse, a red-coated brass band, a clown, an elephant ripped through the middle. “And did you see the elephant?” she asked her brother Tom, who had found the piece of poster in the street when he was in town marketing the butter and eggs. “Was it really there? And the clown?”
- 2 But the ecstatic, eleven-year-old quiver in her voice, and the way she pirouetted on her bare toes as he led the horse out of the buggy shafts, made him feel that perhaps in picking up the poster he had been unworthy of his own seventeen years; so with an offhand shrug he drawled, “Everybody said it wouldn't amount to much. A few ponies and an elephant or two—but what's an elephant?”
- 3 She wheeled from him, resenting his attempt to scoff away such wonders. The bit of poster had spun a new world before her, excited her, given wild, soaring impetus to her imagination; and now, without in the least understanding herself, she wanted the excitement and the soaring, even though it might stab and rack her.
- 4 It was supper-time, her father just in from the field and turning the horses loose at the water-trough, so off she sped to greet him, her bare legs flashing, her throat too tight to cry out, passionate to communicate her excitement, to find response.
- 5 But the skittish old roan Billie took fright at the fluttering poster, and her father shouted for her to watch what she was doing and keep away from the horses. For a minute she stood quite still, cold, impaled by the rebuff; then again she wheeled, and, as swiftly as before, ran to the house.
- 6 A wave of dark heat, hotter than the summer heat, struck her at the door. “Look—” she pierced it shrilly— “what Tom brought me—a circus,” and with the poster outstretched she sprang to the stove where her mother was frying pork.
- 7 There was no rebuff this time. Instead, an incredible kind of pity—pity of all things on a day like this. “Never mind, Jenny.” A hot hand gentle on her cheek a minute. “Your day's going to come. You won't spend all your life among chickens and cows or I'm not the woman I think I am!” And then, bewilderingly, an angry clatter of stovelids that made her shrink away dismayed, in sudden dread of her father's coming and the storm that was to break.

- 8 Not a word until he had washed and was sitting down at the table. Then as the platters were clumped in front of him he asked, "What's wrong?" and for answer her mother hurled back, "Wrong? You—and the farm—and the debts—that's what's wrong. There's a circus in town, but do we go? Do we ever go anywhere? Other children have things, and see things, and enjoy themselves, but look, look at it! That's how much of the circus *my* girl gets!"
- 9 Jenny dared to be a little indignant at the scornful way her mother pointed to the piece of poster. A beautiful poster—a band and half an elephant—and she felt exasperated and guilty that there should be a quarrel about it, her father looking so frightened and foolish, her mother so savage and red.
- 10 But even had she been bold enough to attempt an explanation it would have been lost in the din of their voices. Her mother shouted about working her fingers to the bone and nothing for it but skimping and debts. She didn't mind for herself but she wanted Jenny to have a chance. "Look at her clothes and her bare feet! Your own daughter! Why don't you take hold—do something? Nothing ahead of her but chickens and cows! Another ten years—can't you just see the big, gawky know-nothing she's going to be?"
- 11 Jenny gulped, startled. Ten years from now it was a quite different kind of young lady she intended to be. For a moment there was a sick little ball of consternation down near her midriff, a clammy fear her mother might be right—and then she was furious. She wasn't gawky and she wasn't know-nothing. She was farther on in school than any other girl her age. She could do fractions and percentages and draw the map of North America with her eyes shut. Her mother to talk, who only last Sunday when she was writing a letter had to ask how to spell 'necessary'!
- 12 But suddenly the din between her mother and father split apart, and it was Tom speaking. Tom unruffled and magisterial, rising to his seventeen years and the incumbency of maintaining adult dignity at their table. "Can't you hold on and let us eat in peace? We've heard all that before."
- 13 Jenny shivered, it was so fine and brave of Tom.
- 14 "Come on, Jenny, you're not eating anyway. We'll go out and leave them to it."
- 15 It was dangerous, she thought swiftly—parents weren't to be flouted—but she couldn't help herself. Her pride in Tom was uncontrollable, mastering her discretion. Eyes down, bare feet padding quick and silent, she followed him.
- 16 They walked gravely across the yard and sat down on the edge of the water-trough. "It's too bad all right you couldn't go to the circus," Tom consoled her, "but everybody said it wouldn't be worth the money."
- 17 She glanced up puzzled, impatient. Pity again! If only they would just keep quiet and leave her alone—join her, if they liked, to see the circus.
- 18 There was a sudden dilation of life within her, of the world around her—an elephant, a brass band in red coats, half a poster blown from a billboard—and to recapture the moment was all she wanted, to scale the glamour and wonder of it, slowly, exquisitely, to feel herself unfurl.

- 19 “There’s Dad now, starting for the barn,” Tom nudged her. “Better go and finish your supper. I don’t want any more.”
- 20 Neither did she, but to escape him she went. Uneasily, apprehensive that when she was alone with her mother there might be a reckoning for her having taken sides with Tom. And she was afraid of her mother tonight. Afraid because all at once she felt defenseless, perishable. This sudden dilation of life—it was like a bubble blown vast and fragile. In time it might subside, slowly, safely, or it might even remain full-blown, gradually strengthening itself, gradually building up the filmy tissues to make its vastness durable, but tonight she was afraid. Afraid that before the hack of her mother’s voice it might burst and crumple.
- 21 So when she found the kitchen deserted, there was a cool, isolated moment of relief, and then a furtive pose, an alert, blind instinct for survival and escape. She glided across the kitchen, took down the poster from where it still hung over the calendar, and fled with it to the barn.
- 22 There was a side door, and near it a ladder to the loft. No one saw her. She lay limp in the hay, listening to her heart-beat subside. It was a big, solemn loft, with gloom and fragrance and sparrows chattering against its vault of silence. And there, in its dim, high stillness, she had her circus. Not the kind that would stop off at a little town. Not just a tent and an elephant or two. No—for this was her own circus; the splendid, matchless circus of a little girl who had never seen one.
- 23 “You’ll catch it,” Tom said when he found her, “hiding up here instead of helping with the dishes.”
- 24 Catch it she did, but for once the threats of what would happen next time failed to touch her. The circus went on. All night long she wore her purple tights and went riding Billie round and round the pasture in them. A young, fleet-footed Billie. Caparisoned¹ in blue and gold and scarlet, silver bells on reins and bridle—neck arched proudly to the music of the band.

¹caparison: *a rich covering for a horse*

Understanding

14. What does the phrase “she pirouetted on her bare toes” (paragraph 2) imply about Jenny?
- * A. She is thrilled.
B. She is nervous.
C. She is confident.
D. She is frightened.

Understanding

15. What does paragraph 12 suggest about Tom?

- A. He is angry.
- * B. He is mature.
- C. He is judgmental.
- D. He is intimidated.

Knowledge

16. What does the word “consternation” (paragraph 11) mean?

- A. hatred
- * B. anxiety
- C. nuisance
- D. frustration

Knowledge

17. Which literary device is contained in the phrase “this sudden dilation of life” (paragraph 20)?

- A. irony.
- B. paradox.
- * C. metaphor.
- D. hyperbole.

Understanding

18. What is the mood at the end of the story?

- * A. uplifting
- B. ominous
- C. reflective
- D. sorrowful