

EXAM INFORMATION

This exam was developed to enable schools to award credit to students for knowledge equivalent to that learned by students taking the course. This exam covers topics such Purposes of literary study, Recognizing Literary Terms, Forms and Devices, Analyzing and Interpreting Literature and Applying critical frameworks.

The exam contains 75 questions to be answered in 2 hours.

CREDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

The American Council on Education's College Credit Recommendation Service (ACE CREDIT) has evaluated the DSST test development process and content of this exam. It has made the following recommendations:

Area or Course Equivalent: Analyzing and Interpreting Literature

Level: Lower-level baccalaureate

Amount of Credit: 3 Semester Hours

Minimum Score: 400



Analyzing and Interpreting Literature

Source: www.acenet.edu

Form Codes: SA601 and SB601

EXAM CONTENT OUTLINE

The following is an outline of the content areas covered in the examination. The approximate percentage of the examination devoted to each content area is also noted.

I. Reading and Writing Literature 24%

- a. Purposes of literary study (e.g., pleasure, interpretation, cultural context)
- b. Reading strategies (e.g., rereading, annotating, paraphrase, summary)

II. Recognizing Literary Terms, Forms and Devices 53%

- a. Fiction
 - i. Elements of fiction (e.g., plot, character, setting, point of view, theme, style)
 - ii. Forms of fiction (e.g., short, novella, novel)
- b. Poetry
 - i. Elements of poetry (e.g., speaker, tone, imagery, meter, rhythm, and sound patterns (e.g., iambic pentameter, internal rhyme))
 - ii. Forms of poetry (e.g., sonnet, haiku, free verse)
 - iii. Figures of speech (e.g., metaphor, simile, symbolism)
- c. Drama
 - i. Elements of drama (e.g., plot, character, dialogue, spectacle, stage direction)

- ii. Dramatic genres and conventions (e.g., tragedy, comedy, monologue, soliloquy)

III. Analyzing and Interpreting Literature 23%

- a. Applying close reading techniques (e.g., lineation, diction, syntax, imagery, theme)
- b. Interpreting how literary elements cohere to build a theme
- c. Applying critical frameworks (e.g., historical, cultural, and societal contexts)

REFERENCES

Below is a list of reference publications that were either used as a reference to create the exam, or were used as textbooks in college courses of the same or similar title at the time the test was developed. You may reference either the current edition of these titles or textbooks currently used at a local college or university for the same class title. It is recommended that you reference more than one textbook on the topics outlined in this fact sheet.

You should begin by checking textbook content against the content outline provided before selecting textbooks that cover the test content from which to study.

Sources for study material are suggested but not limited to the following:

- Gardner, J., Diaz, J., Lawn, B., Ridl, J., & Schakel, P. (2025). Literature: A portable anthology (6th ed.). Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Mays, K. J. (2024). The Norton introduction to literature (15th ed.). W. W. Norton & Company.
- Meyer, M., & Miller, D. Q. (2024). The compact Bedford introduction to literature (13th ed.). Bedford/St. Martin's.

All test questions are in a multiple-choice format, with one correct answer and two incorrect options. The following are samples of the types of questions that may appear on the exam.

1. Which of the following critical reading practices helps readers to evaluate the challenging literature they may encounter?
 - a. Disregarding one's reaction to the work.
 - b. Understanding the work's cultural context.
 - c. Annotating the work during the first reading.

Examine the following passage from Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* (1915):

As Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from troubled dreams, he found himself transformed in his bed into a monstrous insect. He was lying on his hard, armor-plated back, and when he lifted his head a little he could see his dome-like brown belly divided into bow-shaped ridges, on top of which the precariously perched bed quilt was about to slide off completely. His numerous legs, pitifully thin compared to the rest of him, fluttered helplessly before his eyes.

“What has happened to me?” he thought. It was no dream. His room — a normal, though rather small, human bedroom — lay quiet within its four familiar walls. Above the table, where a collection of cloth samples was unpacked and laid out — Samsa was a traveling salesman — hung the picture that he had recently cut from an illustrated magazine and put in a pretty gilt frame. It showed a lady wearing a small fur hat and a fur stole, sitting upright, holding out to the viewer a heavy fur muff into which her entire forearm had vanished.

Then Gregor looked toward the window, and the dreary weather — he heard the rain falling on the metal ledge of the window — made him feel quite melancholy. “What if I went back to sleep again for awhile and forgot about all this nonsense?” he thought, but it was absolutely impossible, since he was used to sleeping on his right side, and he was unable to get into that position in his present state. No matter how hard he tried to heave himself over onto his right side, he always rocked onto his back again. He tried a hundred times, closing his eyes so he wouldn’t have to look at his wriggly legs, and he didn’t give up until he began to feel a faint, dull ache in his side that he had never felt before.

“Oh God,” he thought, “what a hard job I picked for myself! Traveling day in and day out. Much more stressful than working in the home office; on top of that, the strain of traveling, the worry about making connections, the bad meals at all hours, meeting new people, no real human contact, no one who ever becomes a friend. The devil take it all!” He felt a slight itch on top of his belly; slowly he pushed himself on his back closer to the bedpost, so he could lift his head better; he found the itchy place, which was covered with little white spots he couldn’t identify; he tried to touch the place with one of his legs, but he immediately drew it back, for the contact sent icy shudders through his entire body.

He slid back to his former position. “Getting up so early like this,” he thought, “makes you quite stupid. A man has to have his sleep. Other traveling salesmen live like women in a harem. For instance, when I return to the hotel during the morning to write up my orders, I find these gentlemen just sitting down to breakfast. I should try that with my boss; I would be fired on the spot. Anyway, who knows if that wouldn’t be a good thing for me after all. If it weren’t for my parents, I would have quit long ago, I would have gone to the boss and told him off. That would knock him off his desk! It’s a strange thing, too, the way he sits on top of his desk and talks down to his employees from this height, especially since he’s hard of hearing and we have to come so close to him. Now, I haven’t totally given up hope; as soon as I’ve saved the money to pay back what my parents owe

him — that should take another five or six years — I'll certainly do it. Then I'll take the big step. Right now, though, I have to get up, because my train leaves at five."

2. How does Kafka's choice of plain language in the passage contribute to its effect?
 - a. It foregrounds the absurdity of Gregor's situation and alienates the audience from him.
 - b. It heightens the emotion of the scene and increases the audience's sympathy for Gregor.
 - c. It explains the cause of Gregor's situation and enables the audience to understand the transformation better.
3. Which feature of the passage would contribute most strongly to a close reading focused on a theme of alienation?
 - a. The matter-of-fact narrative treatment of the absurd.
 - b. The strong actions of the protagonist to get out of bed.
 - c. The realistic details of Gregor's bedroom and his family pictures.
4. What do Gregor's reactions to his transformation tell us about his character?
 - a. His depression has overwhelmed him.
 - b. His overconfidence has been punished.
 - c. His devotion to duty has dehumanized him.
5. What details in the passage emphasize the gap between Gregor's new body and his old mind?
 - a. Gregor worries that he will miss his train.
 - b. Gregor flutters his thin new legs helplessly.
 - c. Gregor tries to scratch an itch that he cannot reach.

Answers to sample questions:

1-B; 2-C; 3-A ; 4-C; 5-C