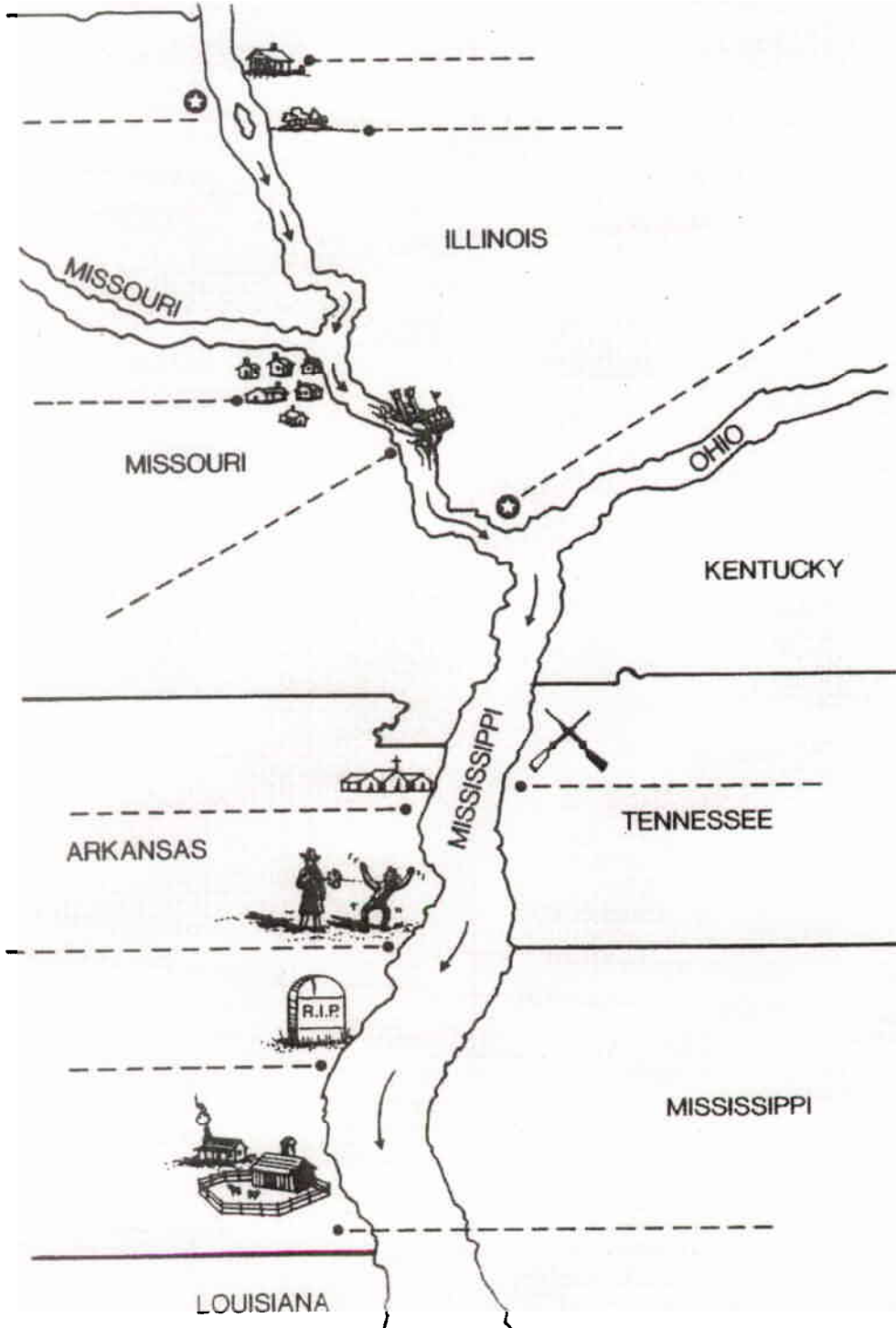


Charting the Trip

As you read, locate the following and write the identification on the dotted line.

- Cairo
- Boggs' Shooting
- St. Petersburg
- Jackson's Island
- Phelps' Farm
- St. Louis
- Camp Meeting
- Pap's Cabin
- Wilks' Funeral
- The Feud
- Wrecked Steamboat



BRENT STAPLES

Just Walk on By: Black Men and Public Space

Brent Staples, born in 1951 in Chester, Pennsylvania, has a doctorate in psychology and has taught, but he has built a career as a reporter and columnist. He is on the editorial board of the New York Times and writes on education, culture, and politics for the Times, Ms., and Harper's. Staples's memoir, Parallel Time: Growing Up in Black and White (1994), tells the story of his youth and that of his younger brother, whose violent life followed a very different path.

"Just Walk on By" originally appeared in Ms. As you read, think about why this piece might be appropriate for a publication intended primarily for women.

My first victim was a woman—white, well dressed, probably in her early twenties. I came upon her late one evening on a deserted street in Hyde Park, a relatively affluent neighborhood in an otherwise mean, impoverished section of Chicago. As I swung onto the avenue behind her, there seemed to be a discreet, uninflam-matory distance between us. Not so. She cast back a worried glance. To her, the youngish black man—a broad six feet two inches with a beard and billowing hair, both hands shoved into the pockets of a bulky military jacket—seemed menacingly close. After a few more quick glimpses, she picked up her pace and was soon running in earnest. Within seconds she disappeared into a cross street.

That was more than a decade ago, I was twenty-two years old, a graduate student newly arrived at the University of Chicago. It was in the echo of that terrified woman's footfalls that I first began to know the unwieldy inheritance I'd come into—the ability to alter public space in ugly ways. It was clear that she thought herself the quarry of a mugger, a rapist, or worse. Suffering a bout of insomnia, however, I was stalking sleep, not defenseless way-

farers. As a softy who is scarcely able to take a knife to a raw chicken—let alone hold one to a person's throat—I was surprised, embarrassed, and dismayed all at once. Her flight made me feel like an accomplice in tyranny. It also made it clear that I was indistinguishable from the muggers who occasionally seeped into the area from the surrounding ghetto. That first encounter, and those that followed, signified that a vast, unnerving gulf lay between nighttime pedestrians—particularly women—and me. And I soon gathered that being perceived as dangerous is a hazard in itself. I only needed to turn a corner into a dicey situation, or crowd some frightened, armed person in a foyer somewhere, or make an errant move after being pulled over by a policeman. Where fear and weapons meet—and they often do in urban America—there is always the possibility of death.

In that first year, my first away from my hometown, I was to become thoroughly familiar with the language of fear. At dark, shadowy intersections, I could cross in front of a car stopped at a traffic light and elicit the *thunk, thunk, thunk* of the driver—black, white, male, or female—hammering down the door locks. On less traveled streets after dark, I grew accustomed to but never comfortable with people crossing to the other side of the street rather than pass me. Then there were the standard unpleasantries with policemen, doormen, bouncers, cabdrivers, and others whose business it is to screen out troublesome individuals *before* there is any nastiness.

I moved to New York nearly two years ago and I have remained an avid night walker. In central Manhattan, the near-constant crowd cover minimizes tense one-on-one street encounters. Elsewhere—in SoHo, for example, where sidewalks are narrow and tightly spaced buildings shut out the sky—things can get very taut indeed.

After dark, on the warrenlike streets of Brooklyn where I live, I often see women who fear the worst from me. They seem to have set their faces on neutral, and with their purse straps strung across their chests bandolier-style, they forge ahead as though bracing themselves against being tackled. I understand, of course, that the danger they perceive is not a hallucination. Women are particularly vulnerable to street violence, and young black males are drastically overrepresented among the perpetrators of that violence. Yet these truths are no solace against the kind of alienation

that comes of being ever the suspect, a fearsome entity with whom pedestrians avoid making eye contact.

It is not altogether clear to me how I reached the ripe old age of twenty-two without being conscious of the lethality nighttime pedestrians attributed to me. Perhaps it was because in Chester, Pennsylvania, the small, angry industrial town where I came of age in the 1960s, I was scarcely noticeable against a backdrop of gang warfare, street knifings, and murders. I grew up one of the good boys, had perhaps a half-dozen fistfights. In retrospect, my shyness of combat has clear sources.

As a boy, I saw countless tough guys locked away; I have since buried several, too. They were babies, really—a teenage cousin, a brother of twenty-two, a childhood friend in his mid-twenties—all gone down in episodes of bravado played out in the streets. I came to doubt the virtues of intimidation early on. I chose, perhaps unconsciously, to remain a shadow—timid, but a survivor.

The fearsomeness mistakenly attributed to me in public places often has a perilous flavor. The most frightening of these confusions occurred in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when I worked as a journalist in Chicago. One day, rushing into the office of a magazine I was writing for with a deadline story in hand, I was mistaken for a burglar. The office manager called security and, with an ad hoc posse, pursued me through the labyrinthine halls, nearly to my editor's door. I had no way of proving who I was. I could only move briskly toward the company of someone who knew me.

Another time I was on assignment for a local paper and killing time before an interview. I entered a jewelry store on the city's affluent Near North Side. The proprietor excused herself and returned with an enormous red Doberman pinscher straining at the end of a leash. She stood, the dog extended toward me, silent to my questions, her eyes bulging nearly out of her head. I took a cursory look around, nodded, and bade her good night.

Relatively speaking, however, I never fared as badly as another black male journalist. He went to nearby Waukegan, Illinois, a couple of summers ago to work on a story about a murderer who was born there. Mistaking the reporter for the killer, police officers hauled him from his car at gunpoint and but for his press credentials would probably have tried to book him. Such episodes are not uncommon. Black men trade tales like this all the time.

Over the years, I learned to smother the rage I felt at so often being taken for a criminal. Not to do so would surely have led to madness. I now take precautions to make myself less threatening. I move about with care, particularly late in the evening. I give a wide berth to nervous people on subway platforms during the wee hours, particularly when I have exchanged business clothes for jeans. If I happen to be entering a building behind some people who appear skittish, I may walk by, letting them clear the lobby before I return, so as not to seem to be following them. I have been calm and extremely congenial on those rare occasions when I've been pulled over by the police.

And on late-evening constitutionalists I employ what has proved to be an excellent tension-reducing measure: I whistle melodies from Beethoven and Vivaldi and the more popular classical composers. Even steely New Yorkers hunching toward nighttime destinations seem to relax, and occasionally they even join in the tune. Virtually everybody seems to sense that a mugger wouldn't be warbling bright, sunny selections from Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*. It is my equivalent of the cowbell that hikers wear when they know they are in bear country.

For Discussion and Writing

1. How does Staples describe himself? How is he sometimes seen by others?
2. Staples begins his essay by discussing the effect of his presence on another person. However, others' reactions to his presence affect him in return, and he spends much of the essay explaining the emotional and practical effects he experiences as a consequence of his interactions. How is the complication and paradox of these situations expressed by the last sentence about Staples's whistling classical music being the "equivalent of the cowbell that hikers wear when they know they are in bear country" (par. 12)?
3. Compare Staples's reaction to race-inflected encounters to James Baldwin's reaction to the encounter in the restaurant in "Notes of a Native Son" (p. 39). What might the differences tell us about the individuals and their respective times?
4. The person with whom you find yourself identifying in a story sometimes depends on your own identity. With whom did you identify at the start of Staples's essay, and how did it affect your reading of the full piece?

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BRENT STAPLES

Just Walk on By: Black Men and Public Space

(pp. 362–65)

SUGGESTED APPROACHES

This short essay could be investigated over a single class period. Since so much of its impact depends on the reader's identification with Staples or the women he describes, an interrupted reading of the first paragraph (see Appendix) might be a good way for students to connect on that emotional level. Before revealing the title of the day's reading, the teacher could give students the first sentence only, and ask them to write their responses. Sentences 2, 3, and 4 should follow, and then sentences 5 and 6. This division condenses the essay's drama and allows students to consider whether Staples is fair in his representation of the frightened woman without knowing the race of the speaker.

The class might discuss the essay's structure, which is primarily a series of incidents, some of which are followed by commentary, most not. This contrasts nicely with the structure of Judith Ortiz Cofer's essay, which follows each personal incident with an analysis of its implications. Another point to note is the emotional distance Staples creates through irony ("footfalls," "quarry," "errant move," "bravado," "constitutional").

All in all, this essay is likely to generate lively, even heated, discussion of stereotypes and assumptions based on the combination of race and gender.

QUESTIONS ON RHETORIC AND STYLE

1. What is the effect of the opening paragraph on the reader? Does Staples draw you in or distance you?
2. Staples structures his essay around personal experiences. Why does he include so many? Does each have a specific purpose, or could one or more have been excluded? (Note the changes in time period, his age, and place.)
3. In paragraph 4, he writes, "I understand, of course, that the danger they [women] perceive is not a hallucination." What is the purpose of this statement?
4. Paragraphs 7, 8, 9, and 11 all end with a similar sentence. What is the similarity? What is the effect of this parallelism?
5. Why does Staples juxtapose seemingly formal language (such as "errant move," "wee hours," and "constitutional") with informal expressions (such as "dicey")?
6. What does Staples mean by his final sentence: "It is my equivalent of the cowbell that hikers wear when they know they are in bear country"? Does this statement change the terms of the "hunter and hunted" he has established in the essay?
7. What examples of irony do you find throughout the essay?

SIMULATED AP ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. **Rhetorical Analysis.** In paragraphs 1–5 of "Just Walk on By," Staples describes his experience of being stereotyped on the basis of sex and race. Write an essay analyzing the rhetorical strategies he uses to achieve his purpose.
2. **Paired Texts.** In Judith Ortiz Cofer's "The Myth of the Latin Woman" (paragraphs 9 and 10) and in the Staples essay (paragraphs 1–3), the writers describe public responses to them on the basis of race, ethnicity, and gender. Write an essay comparing and contrasting the stylistic choices and rhetorical strategies of the two authors.
3. **Rhetorical Analysis.** Use as text 1 the first six paragraphs of "On Compassion" by Barbara Lazear Ascher and as text 2 the first three paragraphs of "Just Walk on By: Black Men and

- Public Space" by Brent Staples. Each of the two passages describes an encounter between two people and a reflection concerning its meaning. Read the passages carefully, and write an essay in which you compare and contrast the ways each writer conveys the experience. Your analysis should include a discussion of speaker, point of view, selection of detail, and other stylistic and rhetorical features you consider significant.
4. **Argument.** In his essay "Just Walk on By: Black Men and Public Space," Brent Staples argues that black males are perceived as threatening public space. Is the main variable gender? That is, is a man—of any race—likely to be perceived as a threat when he is in a public space, such as a street or mall? Write an essay using personal experiences, observations, or current events to support your position.

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

These multiple-choice questions refer to the entire essay.

1. What is the purpose of the opening paragraph?
 - a. to state the thesis of the essay
 - b. to shock the reader by disclosing the writer's guilt
 - c. to provide an example that will frame the essay
 - d. to evoke an emotional response from the reader
 - e. to mock the response of the woman being described
2. Paragraph 2 contains all of the following EXCEPT
 - a. vivid description
 - b. an abstract statement
 - c. figurative language
 - d. parallel syntax
 - e. understatement
3. What is the primary rhetorical function of the sentence "I understand, of course, that the danger they perceive is not a hallucination" (paragraph 5)?
 - a. to provide an example that is the exception to the rule
 - b. to acknowledge a counterargument
 - c. to present a misconception that Staples will correct
 - d. to concede that Staples might be mistaken
 - e. to introduce another of Staples's personal experiences
4. What is the purpose of paragraph 10?
 - a. to broaden Staples's point beyond personal experience
 - b. to demonstrate that Staples is more fortunate than most other black men
 - c. to suggest a solution to the problem Staples raised in previous paragraphs
 - d. to introduce a new issue that complicates Staples's argument
 - e. to signal that Staples is ready to draw his conclusion
5. All of the following are examples of irony EXCEPT
 - a. "menacingly" (paragraph 1)
 - b. "unwieldy inheritance" (paragraph 2)
 - c. "as though bracing themselves against being tackled" (paragraph 5)
 - d. "lethally . . . attributed to me" (paragraph 6)
 - e. "smother the rage" (paragraph 11)
6. The last sentence of the essay is an example of
 - I. irony
 - II. paradox
 - III. analogy
 - a. I only
 - b. II only
 - c. III only
 - d. I and II only
 - e. I, II, and III

7. Staples cites the example of "melodies from Beethoven and Vivaldi and the more popular classical composers" to do which of the following?
 - a. demonstrate his impressive knowledge of classical music
 - b. defy the stereotypes of what black men are assumed to know
 - c. include black composers who understand the indignities he has experienced
 - d. allude to music with which his audience is likely to be familiar
 - e. describe music that is known to have a calming effect
8. The speaker's attitude toward the experiences he relates is a combination of
 - a. contempt, cynicism, and fear
 - b. confusion, concern, and bitterness
 - c. anger, irony, and reason
 - d. detachment, disdain, and reproach
 - e. remorse, anxiety, and sympathy

SUGGESTED WRITING ASSIGNMENTS.

1. Write an essay in which you analyze how Brent Staples appeals to his original audience, the readers of *Ms.* magazine. How does he keep from antagonizing them or making them feel accused? Or does he? Pay particular attention to his use of examples, his reference to a counterargument, and his diction.
2. Write an essay challenging Staples for making stereotypical assumptions about women's reactions similar to those assumptions he accuses women of making about his intentions.
3. Write a letter of advice to Brent Staples as though you were James Baldwin, Martin Luther King Jr., or Sojourner Truth.
4. Explain how W. E. B. DuBois's concept of "double-consciousness" applies to Brent Staples as he describes himself in this essay. Include consideration of Staples's statement: "Over the years, I learned to smother the rage I felt at so often being taken for a criminal. Not to do so would surely have led to madness." (For more on "double-consciousness" see Connections.)
5. Write an essay that centers on an experience you've had in which you were stereotyped on the basis of race, age, ethnicity, geographical origin, or gender. What larger conclusions can you draw from this experience?

CONNECTIONS INSIDE AND OUTSIDE 50 ESSAYS

INSIDE

Essays that explore how a person responds to stereotyping include the following:

- "Notes of a Native Son" by James Baldwin
- "The Myth of the Latin Woman: I Just Met a Girl Named Maria" by Judith Ortiz Cofer
- "How It Feels to Be Colored Me" by Zora Neale Hurston
- "On Being Black and Middle Class" by Shelby Steele

OUTSIDE

- In his essay "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," African American writer and intellectual W. E. B. DuBois defined "double-consciousness": "It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness—an American, a Negro; two warring souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder."
- One way to view Staples, particularly the smothering rage to which is alludes, is through this lens of "double-consciousness." Students might explore what the concept means, how it both separates and protects, and how it applies to Staples.

Practice Test 2

Section I: Multiple-Choice Questions

Time 60 minutes

56 questions

Directions: This section consists of selections from prose works and questions on their content, form, and style. Read each selection carefully. Choose the best answer of the five choices.

Questions 1–14. Read the following passage carefully before you begin to answer the questions.

First Passage

- Here then was I (call me Mary Beton, Mary Seton, or Mary Carmichael or by any name you please — it is not a matter of any importance) sitting on the banks of a river a week or two ago in fine October weather, lost in thought. That collar I have spoken of, women and fiction, the need of coming to some conclusion on a subject that raises all sorts of prejudices and passions, bowed my head to the ground. To the right and left bushes of some sort, golden and crimson, glowed with the colour, even it seemed burnt with the heat, of fire. On the further bank the willows wept in perpetual lamentation, their hair about their shoulders. The river reflected whatever it chose of sky and bridge and burning tree, and when the undergraduate had oared his boat through the reflections they closed again, completely, as if he had never been. There one might have sat the clock round lost in thought. Thought — to call it by a prouder name than it deserved — had let its line down into the stream. It swayed, minute after minute, hither and thither among the reflections and weeds, letting the water lift it and sink it, until — you know the little tug — the sudden conglomeration of an idea at the end of one's line: and then the cautious hauling of it in, and the careful laying of it out? Alas, laid on the grass how small, how insignificant this thought of mine looked; the sort of fish that a good fisherman puts back into the water so that it may grow fatter and be one day worth cooking and eating. I will not trouble you with that thought now, though if you look carefully you may find it for yourselves. . . .
- But however small it was, it had, nevertheless, the mysterious property of its kind — put back into the mind, it became at once very exciting and important; and as it darted and sank, and flashed hither and thither, set up such a wash and tumult of ideas that it was impossible to sit still. It was thus that I found myself walking with extreme

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE

- rapidly across a grass plot. Instantly a man's figure rose to intercept me. Nor did I at first understand that the gestulations of a curious-looking object, in a cut-away coat and evening shirt, were aimed at me. His face expressed horror and indignation. Instinct rather than reason came to my help; he was a Beadle, I was a woman. This was the turf, there was the path. Only the Fellows and Scholars are allowed here; the gravel is the place for me. Such thoughts were the work of a moment. As I regained the path the arms of the Beadle sank, his face assumed its usual repose, and thought turf is better walking than gravel, no very great harm was done. The only charge I could bring against the Fellows and scholars of whatever the college might happen to be was that in protection of their turf, which has been rolled for 300 years in succession, they had sent my little fish into hiding.
- What an idea it had been that had sent me so audaciously trespassing I could not now remember. The spirit of peace descended like a cloud from heaven, for if the spirit of peace dwells anywhere, it is in the courts and quadrangles of Oxbridge on a fine October morning. Strolling through those colleges past those ancient halls the roughness of the present seemed smoothed away; the body seemed contained in a miraculous glass cabinet through which no sound could penetrate, and the mind, freed from any contact with facts (unless one trespassed on the turf again), was at liberty to settle down upon whatever meditation was in harmony with the moment.

- As chance would have it, some stray memory of some old essay about revisiting Oxbridge in the long vacation brought Charles Lamb to mind. . . .
- 95) Indeed, among all the dead . . . Lamb is one of the most congenial. . . . For his essays are superior . . . because of that wild flash of imagination that lightning crack of genius in the middle of them which leaves them flawed and imperfect, but started with poetry. . . . It then occurred to me that the very manuscript itself which Lamb had looked at was only a few hundred yards away, so that one could follow Lamb's footsteps across the quadrangle to that famous library where the treasure is kept. Moreover, I recollected, as I put this plan into execution, it is in this famous library that the manuscript of Thackeray's *Esmond* is also preserved . . . but here I was actually at the door which leads to the library itself. I must have opened it, for instantly there issued, like a guardian angel barring the way with a flutter of black gown instead of white wings, a deprecating, silvery, kindly gentleman, who regretted in a low voice as he waved me back that ladies are only admitted to the library if accompanied by a Fellow of the College or furnished with a letter of introduction.
- 110) That a famous library has been cursed by a woman is a matter of complete indifference to a famous library. Venerable and calm, with all its treasures safe locked within its breast, it sleeps forever. Never will I wake those echoes, never will I ask for that hospitality again.

- 115) That a famous library has been cursed by a woman is a matter of complete indifference to a famous library. Venerable and calm, with all its treasures safe locked within its breast, it sleeps forever. Never will I wake those echoes, never will I ask for that hospitality again.

1. According to the passage, the narrator uses several names (lines 1-2) in order to
- make a universal statement about all humankind
 - deemphasize her personal identity
 - introduce her many pseudonyms as an author
 - attempt to impress the reader with her literacy
 - mask her true identity from the reader
2. The literary device used to describe the speaker's thought "Thought . . . eating" (lines 24-38) is
- a simile
 - a metaphor
 - personification
 - an apostrophe
 - hyperbole
3. In the phrase "you know the little tug" (lines 29-30), the speaker abstractly refers to
- a fish's pull on a fishing line
 - the Beadle's insisting she move off the lawn
 - the annoying loss of a thought
 - the sudden awareness of an idea
 - the pull of her guilty conscience
4. The effect that the Beadle has on the narrator is to
- encourage her pursuit of knowledge
 - cause her thoughts to retreat
 - assure her of correct directions
 - condemn the women's movement
 - inquire if she needs additional assistance
5. It can be inferred that the narrator realizes that she cannot remember her thought because
- it passes so quickly
 - the student rowing by interrupts it
 - it is not important enough
 - it does not compare to great author's ideas
 - it is so carefully and slowly thought out
6. The lawn and library serve the purpose of
- symbolizing the obstacles that women face
 - reminding readers of the rigors of university study
 - contrasting relaxation with research
 - introducing the existence of equality for women
 - minimizing the author's point about women's roles

7. The passage contains all of the following rhetorical devices EXCEPT
- personification
 - metaphor
 - simile
 - literary allusion
 - allegory
8. The author's purpose in the passage is to
- explain her anger at the Beadle
 - personify nature's splendor
 - illustrate how men can inhibit women's intellectual pursuits
 - recall the enticing glory of university study
 - preach her beliefs about women's roles in society
9. The organization of the passage could be best characterized as
- stream of consciousness mixed with narration of specific events
 - comparison and contrast of two incidents
 - exposition of the women's movement and the author's opinions
 - description of both external reality and the author's thoughts
 - flowing smoothly from general ideas to specific statements
10. The pacing of the sentence "But however small it was . . . it was impossible to sit still" (lines 42–49)
- reflects the acceleration of her thoughts
 - represents a continuation of the pace of the description of the river
 - contrasts with the fish metaphor
 - suggests a sluggishness before the Beadle's interruption
 - parallels that of the description of the library doorman
11. The speaker's description of the Beadle and the library doorman serves to
- confirm the horror of what she has done
 - frighten women away from universities
 - encourage women to rebel against men
 - contrast the men's manners
 - satirize the petty men who enforce the rules
12. The phrase "for instantly there issued waved me back" (lines 114–119) can best be characterized as containing
- obvious confusion from the doorman
 - metaphorical reference to a jailer
 - awed wonder at the man's position
 - humorous yet realistic description
 - matter-of-fact narration

13. At the time of the occurrences she describes, the speaker probably felt all of the following EXCEPT
- indignation
 - bewilderment
 - delight
 - exasperation
 - repression

14. The pattern of the passage can best be described as
- alternating between a description of external reality and internal commentary
 - the presentation of a social problem followed by its resolution
 - general statements followed by illustrative detail
 - presentation of theory followed by exceptions to that theory
 - comparison and contrast of great authors' ideas

Questions 15–26. Read the following passage carefully before you begin to answer the questions.

Second Passage

(Alexander Pope) professed to have learned his poetry from Dryden, whom, whenever an opportunity was presented, he praised through his whole life with unvaried liberality; and perhaps his character may receive some illustration if he be compared with his master.

- (10) Integrity of understanding and nicety of discernment were not allotted in a less proportion to Dryden than to Pope. The rectitude of Dryden's mind was sufficiently shown by the dismissal of his poetical prejudices, and then rejection of unnatural thoughts and rugged numbers.
- (15) But Dryden never desired to apply all the judgment that he had. He wrote, and professed to write, merely for the people, and when he pleased others, he contented himself. He spent no time in struggles to rouse latent powers; he never attempted to make that better which was already good, nor often to
- (20) mend what he must have known to be faulty. He wrote, as he tells us, with very little consideration; when occasion or necessity called upon him, he poured out what the present moment happened to supply, and, when once it had passed the press, ejected it from his mind: for when he had no pecuniary interest, he had no further solicitude.
- (25) Pope was not content to satisfy; he desired to excel, and therefore always endeavored to do his best: he did not court the candor, but dared the judgment of his reader, and, expecting no indulgence from others, he showed none to himself. He examined lines and words with minute and punctilious observation, and retouched every part with indefatigable diligence, till he had left nothing to be forgiven. . . .
- (30) His declaration that his care for his works ceased at their publication was