

**PRACTICING TO TAKE THE  
GRE<sup>®</sup>  
LITERATURE  
IN ENGLISH  
TEST  
2nd Edition**

**INCLUDES:**

- An actual GRE Literature in English Test administered in 1989-90
- Sample questions, instructions, and answer sheets
- Percent of examinees answering each question correctly

**AN OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE GRE BOARD**

The Graduate Record Examinations Program offers a General Test measuring developed verbal, quantitative, and analytical abilities and Subject Tests measuring achievement in the following 16 fields:

Biochemistry, Cell and Molecular Biology	Economics Education	Literature in English	Political Science
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The Graduate Record Examinations Board has officially made available for purchase practice books, each containing a full-length test, for 15 of the Subject Tests. A practice book is not available for the Biochemistry, Cell and Molecular Biology Test at this time. Two General Test practice books are also available. These practice books may be purchased by using the order form on page 143.

Individual booklets describing each test and including sample questions are available free of charge for all 16 Subject Tests. These booklets may be requested by writing to:

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# BACKGROUND FOR THE TEST

## PRACTICING TO TAKE THE GRE® LITERATURE IN ENGLISH TEST

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This practice book has been published on behalf of the Graduate Record Examinations Board to help potential graduate students prepare to take the GRE Literature in English Test. The book contains the actual GRE Literature in English Test administered in October 1989, along with a section of sample questions, and includes information about the purpose of the GRE Subject Tests, a detailed description of the content specifications for the GRE Literature in English Test, and a description of the procedures for developing the test. All test questions that were scored have been included in the practice test.

The sample questions included in this practice book are organized by content category and represent the types of questions included in the test. The purpose of these questions is to provide some indication of the range of topics covered in the test as well as to provide some additional questions for practice purposes. These questions do not represent either the length of the actual test or the proportion of actual test questions within each of the content categories.

Before you take the full-length test, you may want to answer the sample questions. A suggested time limit is provided to give you a rough idea of how much time you would have to complete the sample questions if you were answering them on an actual timed test. After answering the sample questions, evaluate your performance within content categories to determine whether you would benefit by reviewing certain courses.

This practice book contains a complete test book, including the general instructions printed on the back cover and inside back cover. When you take the test at the test center, you will be given time to read these instructions. They show you how to mark your answer sheet properly and give you advice about guessing.

Try to take this practice test under conditions that simulate those in an actual test administration. Use the answer sheets provided on pages 135 to 142 and mark your answers with a No. 2 (soft-lead) pencil as you will do at the test center. Give yourself 2 hours and 50 minutes in a quiet place and work through the test without interruption, focusing your attention on the questions with the same concentration you would use in taking the test to earn a score. Since you will not be permitted to use them at the test center, do not use keyboards, dictionaries or other books, compasses, pamphlets, protractors, highlighter pens, rulers, slide rules, calculators (including watch calculators), stereos or radios with headphones, watch alarms including those with flashing lights or alarm sounds, or paper of any kind.

After you complete the practice test, use the work sheet and conversion tables on pages 66 and 67 to score your test. The work sheet also shows the estimated percent of GRE Literature in English Test examinees from a recent three-

year period who answered each question correctly. This will enable you to compare your performance on the questions with theirs. Evaluating your performance on the actual test questions as well as the sample questions should help you determine whether you would benefit further by reviewing certain courses before taking the test at the test center.

We believe that if you use this practice book as we have suggested, you will be able to approach the testing experience with increased confidence.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

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If you have any questions about any of the information in this book, please write to:

Graduate Record Examinations  
Educational Testing Service  
P.O. Box 6000  
Princeton, NJ 08541-6000

## **PURPOSE OF THE GRE SUBJECT TESTS**

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The GRE Subject Tests are designed to help graduate school admission committees and fellowship sponsors assess the qualifications of applicants in their subject fields. The tests also provide students with an assessment of their own qualifications.

Scores on the tests are intended to indicate students' knowledge of the subject matter emphasized in many undergraduate programs as preparation for graduate study. Since past achievement is usually a good indicator of future performance, the scores are helpful in predicting students' success in graduate study. Because the tests are standardized, the test scores permit comparison of students from different institutions with different undergraduate programs.

The Graduate Record Examinations Board recommends that scores on the Subject Tests be considered in conjunction with other relevant information about applicants. Because numerous factors influence success in graduate school, reliance on a single measure to predict success is not advisable. Other indicators of competence typically include undergraduate transcripts showing courses taken and grades earned, letters of recommendation, and GRE General Test scores.

## **DEVELOPMENT OF THE GRE LITERATURE IN ENGLISH TEST**

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Each new edition of the Literature in English Test is developed by a committee of examiners composed of professors in the subject who are on undergraduate and graduate faculties in different types of institutions and in different regions of the United States. In selecting members for the committee of examiners, the GRE Program seeks the advice of the Modern Language Association of America.

The content and scope of each test are specified and reviewed periodically by the committee of examiners who, along with other faculty members who are also subject-matter specialists, write the test questions. All questions proposed for the test are reviewed by the committee and revised as necessary. The accepted questions are assembled into a test in accordance with the content specifications developed by the committee of examiners to ensure adequate coverage of the various aspects of the field and at the same time to prevent overemphasis on any single topic. The entire test is then reviewed and approved by the committee.

Subject-matter and measurement specialists on the ETS staff assist the committee of examiners, providing information and advice about methods of test construction and helping to prepare the questions and assemble the test. In addition, they review every test question to identify and eliminate language, symbols, or content considered to be potentially offensive, inappropriate, or serving to perpetuate any negative attitudes. The test as a whole is also reviewed to make sure that the test questions, where applicable, include an appropriate balance of people in different groups and different roles.

Because of the diversity of undergraduate curricula in this subject, it is not possible for a single test to cover all the material an examinee may have studied.

The examiners, therefore, select questions that test the basic knowledge and understanding most important for successful graduate study in the field. The committee keeps the test up-to-date by regularly developing new editions and revising existing editions. In this way, the test content changes steadily but gradually, much like most curricula.

When a new edition is introduced into the program, it is equated; that is, the scores are related by statistical methods to scores on previous editions so that scores from all editions in use are directly comparable. Although they do not contain the same questions, all editions of the Literature in English Test are constructed according to equivalent specifications for content and level of difficulty, and all measure equivalent knowledge and skills.

After a new edition of the Literature in English Test is first administered, examinees' responses to each test question are analyzed to determine whether the question functioned as expected. This analysis may reveal that a question is ambiguous, requires knowledge beyond the scope of the test, or is inappropriate for the group or a particular subgroup of examinees taking the test. Such questions are not counted in computing examinees' scores.

## **CONTENT OF THE GRE LITERATURE IN ENGLISH TEST**

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Each edition of the test contains approximately 230 questions on poetry, drama, biography, the essay, criticism, the short story, the novel, and, to a limited extent, the history of the language; some questions are based on short works reprinted in their entirety, some are excerpts from longer works. The test draws on English and American literature of all periods; it also contains a few questions on well-known writers from other countries and on works, including the Bible, translated from foreign languages. Throughout, the emphasis is on major authors, works, genres, and movements.

The questions may be somewhat arbitrarily classified into two groups: factual and critical. The factual questions test a student's knowledge of the major writers typically studied in college literature courses. For example, the student may be asked to identify a writer's chief contribution to literary history, to assign a literary work to the period in which it was written, to identify the primary theme of a work, to identify common kinds of poetic meter, to recognize a literary or classical allusion in a given context, to identify a writer or work described in a brief critical comment, or to determine the period or author of a work on the basis of the style and content of a short excerpt. The critical questions test the ability to read a literary text perceptively. Students are asked to examine a given passage of prose or poetry and to answer questions about the theme, meaning, form and structure, literary techniques, and various aspects of its language.

The approximate distribution of questions according to content categories is indicated by the following outline.

- I. Literary Analysis (40-55%)  
Questions that require an ability to interpret given passages of prose and poetry. Such questions may involve recognition of conventions and genres, of allusions and references, and of meaning and tone.
- II. Identification (20-25%)  
Identification of date, author, or work by style and/or content
- III. Factual Information (20-25%)  
Factual questions on literary history and chronology, as well as identification of author or work through a critical statement or biographical information. Also identification of details of character, plot, or setting of a work.
- IV. History and Theory of Literary Criticism (5-10%)

The literary-historical scope of the test follows the distribution below.

Literature to 1660 .....	25-35%
English Literature 1660-1925 .....	30-40%
American Literature before 1925 .....	10-15%
British and American Literature after 1925 .....	20-25%
Continental, Classical, and Comparative Literature .....	5-10%

Examinees may feel that the test has included or emphasized those areas in which they are least prepared. In fact, examinees tend to remember most vividly the questions that proved troublesome. Students taking the GRE should remember that in a test of this many questions much of the material presents no undue difficulty. The very length and scope of the examination eventually work to the benefit of students and give them an opportunity to demonstrate what they do know. No one is expected to answer all the questions correctly.

The committee of examiners is aware of the limitations of the multiple-choice format, particularly for testing competence in literary study. An examination of this kind provides no opportunity for the student to formulate a critical response or support a generalization, and, inevitably, it sacrifices depth to range of coverage. However, in a national testing program designed for a wide variety of students with differing preparations, the use of a large number of short, multiple-choice questions has proved to be the most effective and reliable way of providing a fair and valid examination.

The committee considers the test an instrument by which to offer *supplementary* information about students. In no way is the examination intended to minimize the importance of the students' college records or the recommendations of faculty members who have had the opportunity to work closely with the



students. The committee assumes that those qualities and skills not measured by a national multiple-choice test are reflected in a student's academic record and recommendations. However, the test may help to place students in a national perspective or add another dimension to their profiles. The committee and ETS recommend that a test score not serve as the sole arbiter in the selection process or in decisions relating to scholarship assistance.

It should be noted that a test intended to meet the needs of a particular department should be constructed specifically to measure the knowledge and skills the department considers important. A standardized test, such as the GRE Literature in English Test, allows comparisons of students from different institutions with different programs on *one* measure of competence in English literature. Ideally, a department should not only investigate the relationships between the success of students in advanced study and several measures of competence, but also conduct a systematic evaluation of the test's predictive effectiveness after accumulating sufficient records of the graduate work of its students.

## SAMPLE QUESTIONS

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The sample questions included in this practice book are organized by content category and represent the types of questions included in the test. The purpose of these questions is to provide some indication of the range of topics covered in the test as well as to provide some additional questions for practice purposes. These questions do not represent either the length of the actual test or the proportion of actual test questions within each of the content categories. A time limit of 110 minutes is suggested to give you a rough idea of how much time you would have to complete the sample questions if you were answering them on an actual timed test. Correct answers to the sample questions are listed on page 63.

When you take the actual GRE test, you will be instructed to mark your answers on the separate answer sheet. The directions for the sample questions have been modified. For these questions, you may record your answers in one of two ways: 1) you can use the option bubbles at the bottom-right corner of each question or 2) you can use one of the sample answer sheets provided in this book.

Directions: Each of the questions or incomplete statements is followed by five suggested answers or completions. Select the one that is best in each case.

# I. LITERARY ANALYSIS

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## Literature to 1660

### Questions 1-4

His comb was redder than the fin coral,  
And batailed, as it were a castel wal;  
His bile was blak, and as the jeet it shoon;  
Like asure were his legges, and his toon;  
His nailes whitter than the lilye flowr,  
And lik the burned gold was his colour.

1. The character being described by Chaucer is

(A) joly Absolon (B) Chanticleer (C) Reynard the Fox  
(D) hende Nicholas (E) Pertelote

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

2. Which of the following has two syllables when the lines are properly read aloud?

(A) "were" (line 2) (B) "bile" (line 3) (C) "jeet" (line 3)  
(D) "nailes" (line 5) (E) "flowr" (line 5)

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

3. In line 3, "bile" refers to his

(A) beak (B) liver (C) food  
(D) eye (E) brush

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

4. The *n* in "toon" (line 4) is

(A) part of the stem  
(B) a remnant of the Old English accusative  
(C) a sign of the plural  
(D) a dative plural ending  
(E) a sign of the strong declension

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

Questions 5-6

And that comyn englysshe that is spoken in one shyre varyeth from a nother. In so moche that in my dayes happened that certayn marchauntes were in a shippe in tamyse, for to have sayled over the see into zelande, and for lacke of wynde, thei taryed atte forlond, and wente to lande for to refreshe them. And one of theyme named Sheffelde, a mercer, cam in-to an hows and axed for mete; and specyally he axyd after eggys. And the goode wyf answerde, that she coude speke no frenshe. And the marchaunt was angry, for he also coude speke no frenshe, but wolde have hadde eggys, and she understode hym not. And thenne at laste a nother sayd that he wolde have eyren. Then the good wyf sayd that she understod hym wel.

5. The merchants in the passage intended to go

- (A) across the Channel
- (B) across the Thames
- (C) across the Irish Sea
- (D) to the inland counties
- (E) to the western coast of England

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

6. The author relates an incident illustrating the

- (A) difficulties of traveling in a foreign country
- (B) attitude of English merchants toward countryfolk
- (C) varieties of dialects in common use in England
- (D) changing customs of the merchant class
- (E) shortages of food in the inland counties

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

7. . . . as spices, the more they are beaten, the sweeter scent they send forth; or as the herb camomile, the more it is trodden down, the more it spreadeth abroad; so virtue and honesty, the more it is spited, the more it sprouteth and springeth.

This passage illustrates the style best labeled as

- (A) Augustan (B) Petrarchan (C) Skeltonic
- (D) Swiftian (E) Euphuistic

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

8. Wherefore thinke on the doubtfull state of warres,  
Where Mars hath sway, he keepes no certayne course.  
Sometimes he lettes the weaker to prevaile,  
Sometimes the stronger stoupes: hope, feare, and rage  
With eylesse lott rules all; uncertayne good,  
Most certaine harmes, be his assured happes.

Which of the following best summarizes the lines above?

- (A) Men are inherently malevolent and therefore justly punished by the gods.
- (B) The divine right of the ruler insures his eventual victory.
- (C) The meek shall eventually prevail, but they endure much suffering.
- (D) In a hostile universe, human prowess insures military victory.
- (E) In a world governed by chance, military victory does not necessarily come to those who deserve it.

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

Questions 9-10

An ant is a wise creature for itself, but it is a shrewd thing in an orchard or garden. And certainly men that are great lovers of themselves waste the public. Divide with reason between self love and society, and be so true to thyself as thou be not false to others. It is a poor center of a man's actions, himself. It is right earth. For that only stands fast upon his own center, whereas all things that have affinity with the heavens move upon the center of another, which they benefit.

9. To make his argument more convincing, the author uses

- (A) demonstrations of maximum utility
- (B) rational axioms of proper behavior
- (C) realistic facts of natural existence
- (D) images drawn from commerce and architecture
- (E) analogies from natural history and astronomy

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

10. The passage argues in favor of

- (A) selfishness
- (B) egotism
- (C) social consciousness
- (D) self-reliance
- (E) mass identity

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

11. My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;  
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;  
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;  
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.

The lines above express the speaker's

- (A) sense of the extravagance of some poetic conventions
- (B) sorrow at his inability to love most of the women he meets
- (C) awareness of his social inferiority to the lady he addresses
- (D) intention to end a love affair
- (E) self-delusion as to the beauty of his mistress

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

12. How could communities,  
Degrees in schools and brotherhoods in cities,  
Peaceful commerce from dividable shores,  
The primogenitive and due of birth,  
Prerogative of age, crowns, scepters, laurels,  
But by degree, stand in authentic place?

These lines are most accurately described as a

- (A) justification of a constitutional society based on universal suffrage
- (B) commendation of a tyrannical society based on the great man theory of history
- (C) glorification of an atheistic society based on the survival of the fittest
- (D) plea for a democratic society based on common law
- (E) rationalization of a hierarchical society based on inherited privilege

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

13. Methinks I hear  
Antony call: I see him rouse himself  
To praise my noble act; I hear him mock  
The luck of Caesar, which the gods give men  
To excuse their after wrath: husband, I come:  
Now to that name my courage prove my title!

In these lines Cleopatra asserts that she will

- (A) prove herself a queen by seeking out Caesar
- (B) earn the right to call Antony "husband" by her suicide
- (C) rouse her armies by a stirring act of bravery
- (D) flee so that the field of battle is left to Antony and Caesar
- (E) deflect the "after wrath" of the gods from those she loves

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

Questions 14-18

- When I have seen by Time's fell hand defaced  
The rich, proud cost of outworn buried age;  
When sometime lofty towers I see down-razed,  
And brass eternal slave to mortal rage;
- (5) When I have seen the hungry ocean gain  
Advantage on the kingdom of the shore,  
And the firm soil win of the watery main,  
Increasing store with loss and loss with store;  
When I have seen such interchange of state,
- (10) Or state itself confounded to decay,  
Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminare,  
That Time will come and take my love away.  
This thought is as a death, which cannot choose  
But weep to have that which it fears to lose.
14. Which of the following lines conveys an idea similar to the idea in line 3?
- (A) I all alone beweepe my outcast state  
(B) The fairest votary took up that fire  
(C) Love's fire heats water, water cools not fire  
(D) Like as the waves make toward the pebbled shore  
(E) And sable curls all silvered o'er with white
- (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
15. The subject of the main clause of the first sentence is
- (A) "I" (line 1)  
(B) "brass" (line 4)  
(C) "soil" (line 7)  
(D) "Ruin" (line 11)  
(E) "Time" (line 12)
- (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
16. The argument of lines 1-12 is based on
- (A) prejudice (B) testimony (C) probability  
(D) analogy (E) authority
- (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

17. A work showing a similar preoccupation with time is -

- (A) Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*
- (B) Spenser's "Mutabilitie Cantos"
- (C) Donne's "The Ecstasy"
- (D) Jonson's "A Celebration of Charis"
- (E) Herbert's "The Pulley"

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

18. Which of the following is the best summary of the last two lines?

- (A) To weep is to be cowardly at the prospect of loss.
- (B) To weep is to be ungrateful for the mercy of death.
- (C) To think is to diminish the intensity of experience.
- (D) To love is to exist apart from the flux of experience.
- (E) To love is to know that one must experience loss.

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)



Questions 19-21

I gave to Hope a watch of mine: but he  
An anchor gave to me.  
Then an old prayer-book I did present:  
And he an optic sent.  
With that I gave a vial full of tears:  
But he a few green ears.  
Ah loiterer! I'll no more, no more I'll bring:  
I did expect a ring.

19. The speaker's offerings of "a watch," "a prayer-book," and "a vial of tears" represent his

(A) antiquarian interests  
(B) love of earthly things  
(C) rejection of material possessions  
(D) discovery of scientific principles  
(E) long-time devotion and suffering

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

20. In responding with "an anchor," "an optic" (a telescope), and "a few green ears," Hope gives

(A) advice on navigation  
(B) support for the virtues of country life  
(C) an earnest of future good  
(D) an omen of catastrophe  
(E) a warning against sin

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

21. The speaker's hoped-for reward, "a ring," represents

(A) high social status  
(B) wealth  
(C) luck at games of chance  
(D) eternal union with God  
(E) the certainty of political recognition

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)