

REVIEW GUIDE FOR THE ENGLISH 12 PROVINCIAL EXAM

PART A: STAND-ALONE TEXT

7 Multiple Choice Questions
1 Written Response

Suggested Time: 25 min
Worth 23% of exam

This section will require you to read **ONE** piece of writing. It may be a poem, non-fiction article, or a story. You will answer **7 multiple choice questions** and complete **one written response**.

- **Carefully read the exam question first** (before reading the text) so that you can look for evidence/quotes to support the points you make in your paragraph. Try to **have at least 2-3 specific quotes**, and ensure they are **the best ones** to support what you are saying.
- Remember to **P.E.E. in your paragraph**: Plan to make 2-3 **points** in your paragraph, back each of them up with *specific examples*, and *clearly explain* the examples.
- Respond directly to the prompt given. Use the language of the prompt in your thesis to answer the question.

For example, if the prompt asks you to: Discuss **contrast** in the poem “The Dumka,” your thesis may sound something like: *In B.H. Fairchild’s poem, “The Dumka”, the **contrasting** themes of old and new, past and present, are illustrated through the use imagery and symbolism.*

- Use a **hook** to begin your paragraph, but if you are short on time, don’t stress out about this part.
- Mention the **author and title**, followed by the **topic** (contrast in the above example).
- Have a **clear thesis statement** that outlines your main points you are going to make.
- **Integrate your quotes into your writing**. Cite poetry by giving the line number directly after the quote. For example: The boy feels that “roses are red and violets are blue” (line 4). Cite stories or articles by giving the paragraph number after the quote. For example: The boy is “shaking in terror” (15).
- Do not say “In conclusion...” Your conclusion should re-state the thesis of your essay and show why you’ve proven it to be true. Then, leave the reader with something to think about in regards to the topic.
- This is a formal piece of writing, so **do not use contractions, do not use I, me, we, you...**
- Use **transition words** to make your ideas flow smoothly into one another.
- Make sure you have **CLEARLY** answered the exam question.
- **REVIEW YOUR RUBRIC** (photocopied for you or can be found on the class website)

Stand-Alone Examples

Comments: 5/6 – A thorough and convincing discussion of contrast throughout the poem. A proficient response, but lacks the insight of a 6.

The poem “The Dumka” by B.H. Fairchild is a work rich with contrast. The title itself deriving from the song type “dumka”, a song with strong contrast shows the reader that the poem has many different contrasting parts. Although there are many examples of contrast throughout the work, the most evident is the continual contrast between the couple’s lives present and past. The poem begins with the couple in their old age reminiscing about the many events of their lives. The speaker describes the couple as “dense” (line 10) showing their full lives and many experiences. The idea of the couple being full of experiences is, in itself contrasting. This is because to be well rounded, or full, one has to be full of good, and in contrast, bad experiences. Furthermore the poem shows strong contrast illustrating these hardships and pleasantries. In the beginning of the second stanza the speaker talks of the couple’s memories of living through the Great Depression of the 1930’s “The dust storms of the thirties” (line 12). The speaker then goes on to further show times of hardship by mentioning the following; poverty “bread lines in the city” (line 23), the loss of spirit brought on by the depression “men lining main street like mannequins” (line 24), and the loss of means of war “and then the war” (line 25). At line 26 in “The Dumka” a shift occurs which then portrays the positive times of the couple’s lives. This is shown by the end of the war “The homecoming” (line 26), the increase in wealth “green lawns and a new piano” (line 27-28), and their new relaxed lives “slow mornings of coffee...” (line 31-32). Through the speaker’s use of the positive and negative events of the couple’s lives in “The Dumka” one can see that the poem possesses strong contrast.

Comments: 6/6 - Superior use of text to support its discussion. Language is sophisticated and depth of insight is strong.

In B.H. Fairchild’s poem, “The Dumka”, the contrasting themes of old and new, past and present, are illustrated through the usage of imagery and symbolism. The parent, “in their old age” represent a time long gone – a time of war, financial hardship and agricultural living (line 4). As they recall “breadlines in the city” and “the war,” they look back with nostalgia on “the farm in twilight with piano music” (lines 21-25). Their wistful recollections of the past are in sharp contrast with the emerging lifestyle, which renders them obsolete – a lifestyle of “green lawns” and a “vanishing neighbourhood” (lines 27, 30). The young have moved away from the neighbourhood, leaving the old clinging to the vestiges of the past that remain in the memories of coffee and newspapers” and are forgotten by most (line 31). While the elderly sit and ponder upon the past, they are aware that their lifestyle is antiquated; yet, they see it as the only thing that remains intact in the lives that they have known. Meanwhile, the forgotten old is symbolized by the phonograph, and the dust which settled upon table-tops; juxtaposed against the “mahogany gleam” of a new piano and the green lawns of suburban life, the contrast between the traditional lives of the elderly and the ostentatious desires of the young is illustrated.

PART B: SYNTHESIS TEXTS (M.C.)

14 Multiple Choice Questions

Suggested Time: 25min
Worth 17% of exam

This section will require you to read **TWO** passages. They will be a combination of two different genres: poetry, non-fiction (articles/websites), or fiction (stories). You will answer **14 multiple choice questions**.

Carefully read the exam question for part C first (before reading the texts) so that you can look for evidence/quotes to support the points and underline these while you read.

Refer to the links on my website: mletourneau.weebly.com under “provincial exam info and resources” for instructions on **how to best approach the multiple choice** section of the exam.

PART C: ANALYSIS OF SYNTHESIS TEXTS

2 Multiple Choice Questions

1 Written Response

Suggested Time: 35 min
Worth 30% of exam

This section of the exam is based on the two texts you read in Part B. You will answer **two multiple choice questions** that relate to both texts) and **write one written response**.

- Read the exam question **BEFORE** reading the two texts. This allows you to look for evidence and plan your essay while you read. Underline, take notes, and look for specific evidence that will help you support your points and formulate a response.
- **OUTLINE and organize** your essay before you begin writing. Consider making a T-chart to help you organize your ideas. It will 1) help you draw connections from one idea to another, 2) give you a visual idea of the direction of your essay, 3) help you transition from one key idea to the next, and 4) give you a sense of what will be the best way to order the body paragraphs.

Example:

Happynews for Sale	A Circus in Town
Point #1: Chris’ optimism spurs his determination. Example/Evidence: “So Garner worked, making 200 calls a day to snag clients for Dean Witter. ‘Every time I picked up the phone,’ he recalls, ‘I knew I was getting closer to digging myself out of the hole.’” (2)	Point #1: Jenny’s optimism spurs her imagination. Example/Evidence: “And there, in its dim, high stillness, she had her circus. No the kind that you would stop off at a little town. Not just a tent and an elephant or two. No—for this was her won circus; the splendid matchless circus of a little girl who had never seen one.” (22)
Explanation: Chris Garner is able to see the difference he is making in his and his son’s lives with every phone call he made. This positive outlook is just what he needed to keep working hard.	Explanation: Jenny’s circus, fuelled by her limitless imagination is far better than any circus that she would have seen in her small town.

- Your **THESIS** needs to respond directly to the writing prompt.

For example, if the prompt ask you to: “Assess the role that optimism plays in the lives of Jenny in “Circus in Town” and Chris Gardner in “Happyness for Sale”, then your thesis may sound something like:

As the sole driving force for the unique way in which each of these characters achieved their goals, optimism is the key component to their individual successes.

- This is formal writing, so: use present tense, no colloquial language, do not use contractions, and don’t use I, me, we, us, you, etc. (Instead, use the formal voice: “one”, “many people”, “the reader”, etc.)
- Review your **SYNTHESIS HANDOUTS**, handouts on integrating quotes, how to write an introduction, the **MARKING RUBRIC** and any other **writing handouts** (also, check the website)

Synthesis Examples

Topic: *Assess the role that optimism plays in the lives of Jenny in “Circus in Town” and Chris Gardner in “Happyness for Sale”.*

Comments: 6/6 - Use of **examples and supporting evidence are well chosen**. Uses a **sophisticated approach to synthesis** throughout. This paper employs **skillful control and effective writing**.

Amid despair, hardship and poverty a shining glimmer of hope was envisioned through the eyes of little Jenny from Sinclair Ross’ “Circus in Town” and the remarkable Chris Gardner from “Happyness for Sale” by Jia Lynn Yang. Optimism brought them each to a place where life was better; allowing them to overcome dire circumstances despite the doubts of others. As the sole driving force for the unique way in which each of these characters achieved their goals, optimism was the key component to their individual successes.

From the era of the depression to a modern day struggle Jenny and Chris maintained a positive attitude. Throughout the depression, times were hard and poverty was a mere way of life for thousands of families across the country. Jenny, stuck in these times, a young girl destined to a life of “chickens and cows... [a] gawky know-nothing...” (Sinclair Ross, 2), used an optimistic outlook to imagine a joyful and rich moment in time. Chris Gardner on the other hand, lived through the depression and into a world of homelessness in which he was able to not only survive but eventually make something truly great of himself. While getting off the streets and providing for his son was an accomplishment in itself, Chris Gardner found much success in starting his own company and his fame with the media. “The Gardner gospel of persistence, progress, and faith...”(Jia Lynn Yang, 8), brought about a tangible success to which his entire life had been committed. In contrast, the inner greatness seen in those comparatively short moments of Jenny’s childhood were powered by the same optimism.

The power of maintaining an optimistic spirit had also enabled the characters to overcome the downfalls of those around them. Jenny was able to surpass the doubt and pity of her family as they continually spoke of her future as though she had no chance of success, no opportunity for a better existence. Finding hope in the magical daydreams of the circus Jenny’s spirit facilitated the fantasy against all odds. Chris Gardner also endured hardship in ways that he himself could not have avoided. With “his 20-month-old son, whom he “was raising alone”(6), Chris was forced to work twice as hard in his life as a single parent. The stereotypes accompanying his homelessness must have also been incredibly difficult. It was only with the blessing of the characters’ optimism that such surmounting power was achieved.

Envisioning a better life was the key to success for both of these characters in similar ways. An imagination with the power to bring life to the vision a circus with “a red-coated brass band, a clown, an

elephant ripped through the middle.”(1) was Jenny’s mechanism of escape as “...the threats of what would happen next time failed to touch her.” (Sinclair Ross, 3). Just like Jenny, Chris Gardner also saw something greater in a vision, which combined with his optimism, brought him to the miraculous ending to his truly amazing life’s story. An example of symbolizing this vision was described in Chris Gardner’s story of the man with the Ferrari. “One day he saw a red Ferrari and, ...asked the owner what he did for a living. Stockbroker the man replied. From that moment, Gardner determined to become one too.”(Jia Lynn Yang, 7) His belief that such a task was even possible as he was literally homeless, goes to show how his optimism played such a leading role in his life.

These characters’ abilities to overcome the hardships of their times was truly amazing. Whether it was the attempt to gain a small taste of the joys a childhood dream could bring, or a struggle to success in the harsh modern world of business and wealth, optimism paved the way for the happiness the characters found. With a vision and a positive attitude Jenny and Chris Gardner succeeded to find a better world in their own individual ways.

Comment: A low 6. The writing throughout is **effective**, with an **insightful understanding** of the topic. There are **pertinent references** used, and **ideas are synthesized** nicely.

An individual’s belief regarding personal control can have a significant impact on the decisions that they make, as well as their overall attitude towards life. Such is the case in “Circus in Town” by Sinclair Ross and “ ‘Happyness’ for Sale” by Jia Lynn Yang. In both passages, the main character is forced to deal with the hardships that accompany an impoverished lifestyle. In both cases, the character adapts coping strategies that involve a positive, optimistic outlook towards the future; however, the young and inexperienced Jenny relies on fantasy and imagination as an escape, whereas the more mature Chris is able to channel his energy into changing his misfortunes.

In “Circus in Town”, a young child named Jenny has been brought up in a poverty stricken area that has plagued her family with a life of nothing but “chickens and cows”; however, Jenny is able to escape reality through the use of her powerful imagination. Despite the fact that she is unable to abandon her unfortunate lifestyle, she is able to remain positive after receiving one simple piece of paper: a poster of a circus. Jenny does not attempt to change her unwealthy and insecure circumstances, but rather avoids them by creating her own idealized version of life, complete with “purple lights” and the ability to ride a horse with “silver bells on reins and bridle”. Her overall inexperience with life results in an ignorance towards the ability to change; Jenny does not realize that a change in her misfortunate life is possible, and instead becomes satisfied with changing it in her mind. The poverty that surrounds her does not result in feelings of self pity; however, it also does not result in the drive for realistic change.

Chris Gardner in “ ‘Happyness for Sale’ “ similarly has dealt with experiencing an impoverished lifestyle; however, unlike Jenny, Chris’s drive for change and internal focus of control result in the necessary actions for a new way of life. Chris, who had spent “long nights at the shelter” with his infant son for years, eventually made the necessary decisions to take action against his less than ideal living circumstances. His internal desire to “do something with [his] life” eventually resulted in several astounding milestones, including an interview on “ABC’s news-magazine 20/20”. Chris’s powerful belief that “baby steps count” as long as one is always “moving forward” has led him to a life of wealth, fame, and fortune that he believes is possible for anyone to attain. His experience and maturity when he was homeless resulted in mature decisions and actions, which ultimately led him to an ideal reality.

Both Jenny and Chris have experienced hardship that is immensely difficult to overcome and have remained positive throughout the difficult times; however, Chris’s maturity in decision making allowed him to overcome his circumstances, whereas Jenny’s youthful existence only allows her to dream and fantasize. Overall, one’s attitude towards the circumstances they must deal with will determine the level of happiness they are able to attain; as well, their personal feelings of control will determine whether or not they can achieve what they desire.

PART D: COMPOSITION

Suggested Time: 35 min
Worth 30% of exam

1 Written Response

This section of the exam requires you to **write a multi-paragraph composition** response to a prompt. You may choose from any of the following methods in order to respond to the prompt:

- expository, informative, persuasive and argumentative styles (your standard essay format –PEE)
 - narrative, including use of first or third person (tell a story)
 - descriptive, personal and reflective writing, including descriptions of characters, places, situations, events, etc. (these can be real or imaginary)
 - You can argue in favour of **or** against the topic.
 - You may draw support from the experiences of others or from any aspect of your life, your reading, and your own experiences.
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- **You may wish to write this section of the exam first**, while you are feeling fresh and not pressed for time. However, keep in mind the recommended time for this section of writing is 50 minutes.
 - **Plan ahead!** Outline your thoughts before you write.
 - **Connect the vague prompt to SPECIFICS from real life.**
 - **Be creative!** Take risks; use figurative language and vivid descriptive details!
 - Remember, it is **multi-paragraph!**
 - Leave time to **proof-read!**
 - **REVIEW RUBRIC** and look on the website for more information about this part of the exam

Composition Examples

Topic: *Positive connections with older generations can enrich our lives.*

Comments: A high 6. – It demonstrates **maturity of style** and **sophisticated language**.

The fabric of an old shirt against my palm felt as soft and wrinkly as my father's face when he hit me. He looked at me, and I left. I walked across town, the soles of my feet bare and tough in the loose sand and warm cement.

I went to see a lady whose home was heavy with the powdery smell of old age and quite nights. I had hated this smell when my ratty prison of a highschool sentenced all seniors to thirty hours of community service. Now it was my refuge.

She was standing on the back porch, numbly buttering the freshly laundered shirts of a husband who did not recognize her. Her hands were maps of veins and age spots; roads I have not yet travelled. Stories I have not yet heard. She stopped when she saw me, scalp tensing as she studied the cracks in my skin from the salt of my tears. We didn't say much.

I helped her fold the laundry, and separate wooden clothespins from plastic ones. The air buzzed slightly with the slight scent of soapy anticipation and freshly mown grass. The blue basket contained light spring blankets, almost identical to the ones in which I had during childhood, enveloping myself in a cocoon of lavender scent.

We went inside the home for a drink. The lemonade was too sour, and the ice burned my lips. She looked at me from across the table, with eyes like cloudy oysters with pearls of wisdom. An old Johnny Cash song was playing, but I could tell where it was from.

“Four strong words that blow lonely, even seas that run high, all those things that don’t change, come what may...”

The music swirled like socks in a dryer. An engine started somewhere in the distance.

I could see myself in those eyes. My hands will someday become those hands. All the ecstasies and pains I have experienced will be etched in the lines of my face in the form of cryptic codes for teenagers to decipher. My palms were hot and I wanted to laugh or throw up.

“But the good times are all gone, and I’m bound for wrong on...”

We were just doing laundry, after all.

Comments: 5/6 – Shows a **controlled use of vocabulary** and establishes a **clear sense of voice**.

What is the benefit of having grandparents? Those frail, antique individuals seem fragile, and even mysterious at times. Their long, menacing canes, and glittering mouth pieces watch our every move. But before we escape the panic, we might want to discover the shocking truth.

Grandparents are soft, loving creatures inside their wrinkly shell live wise souls and cheerful spirits. Believe it or not, our predecessors have far more understanding than we do. Years of challenges, hardships and obstacles have sharpened their minds to a crystalline quality. Their knowledge surpasses even the large brains of our parents. When we are in a sticky situation, it is always a wise idea to travel back in time a ways. Grandparents, when needed, can provide more useful advice than the “magical” internet of our era. Although our grandparents may experience inconvenient glitches and viruses we can always rely on their never ending love, and source of information.

Inside each of our grandparents, there is a lively spirit. Behind Grandpa’s thick reading glasses, there are twinkling, smiling, eyes and behind Grandma’s knitted apron, there is a pocket full of candy. Although it may seem hard to believe, Grandpa and Grandma are teenagers at heart. For as long as they live, they will never cease to sing in the bath or dance in the rain. Along with their furry miniature critters, our dear grandparents enrich our lives and provide us with comfort.

Has the truth sunk in? The wise, playful phenomenas we are lucky to call grandparents benefit us in many ways. They connect us to the past, strengthen us in the present, and contribute to a brighter future. Grandparents are unpolished gems, waiting to be discovered by a privileged miner. They are twinkling starts of magic and warm sun rays of love. Without these priceless creatures of the older generations, our fragile world would break apart.

OTHER EXAM REMINDERS:

- The English 12 Provincial Exam is on **THURSDAY, JANUARY 24th** at 9 a.m. **ARRIVE at 8:30 a.m.!!!!!!**
- **Go to the washroom before** the exam. Once it begins, you’ll need to be escorted.
- **Manage your time!** Start with the composition, then synthesis, then stand-alone.

WHAT TO BRING:	WHAT NOT TO BRING:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eraser, white-out, multiple pencils and pens (blue/black ink only)• Student I.D.• Water (maybe a quiet, light snack)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A bad attitude and a tired brain• Any electronic device (phones, tablets, etc.)• Bags, purses, binders, etc.