

1. Romanticism in literature can best be defined as which of the following?

- (A) A movement that seeks to replicate a believable everyday reality
- (B) Literature that is either utilitarian, very personal, or religious
- (C) The exaltation of senses and emotions over reason and intellect
- (D) The presentation of details that are actually part of life
- (E) The belief that intuition and conscience transcend experience

(Questions 2-3 below refer to the same work.)

"A noiseless patient spider,
I mark'd where on a little promontory it stood, isolated,
Mark'd how to explore the vacant vast surrounding,
It launch'd forth filament, filament, filament, out of itself,
Ever unreeling them, ever tirelessly speeding them."

"And you O my Soul where you stand,
Surrounded, detached, in measureless oceans of space,
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking the spheres to connect them,
Till the bridge you will need be form'd, till the ductile anchor hold,
Till the gossamer thread you fling catch somewhere, O my Soul."

2. Which of the following literary devices is used in the first stanza of Walt Whitman's "A Noiseless Patient Spider"?

- (A) Alliteration
- (B) Hyperbole
- (C) Onomatopoeia
- (D) Simile
- (E) Paradox

3. Which is used in the second stanza of Whitman's poem?

- (A) Parallelism
- (B) Oxymoron
- (C) Simile
- (D) Metaphor
- (E) Symbolism

4. Which of the following is NOT a theme of Herman Melville's "Moby Dick"?

- (A) Man against nature
- (B) Betrayal of a friend
- (C) Revenge

- (D) A mysterious power or force
- (E) Pending doom

5. "To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men-that is genius."

The above statement is from which of the following works?

- (A) Frederick Douglass' "My Bondage and My Freedom"
- (B) Oliver Wendell Holmes' "Reflections of a Proud Pedestrian"
- (C) Henry David Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience"
- (D) James Russell Lowell's "Conversations on the Old Poets"
- (E) Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Self-Reliance"

6. Which short story focuses on a conflict between two groups of American colonists?

- (A) "The Big Bear of Arkansas" by T.B. Thorpe
- (B) "A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers" by Henry David Thoreau
- (C) "The Child's Champion" by Walt Whitman
- (D) "The Maypole of Merry Mount" by Nathaniel Hawthorne
- (E) "The Supernaturalism of New England" by John Greenleaf Whittier

7. Henry David Thoreau's "Walden" CANNOT be described as which the following?

- (A) His account of solitary living
- (B) An exercise in understanding human characteristics
- (C) Freedom of living in the natural world around him
- (D) A manual for self-reliance
- (E) His refusal to live by the rules of hard work in order to build wealth

"I died for Beauty – but was scarce
Adjusted in the Tomb,
When One who died for Truth, was lain
In an adjoining room –

He questioned softly "why I failed"?
"For Beauty," I replied –
"And I – for Truth – Themself are One –
We Brethren, are," He said –

And so, as Kinsmen, met a Night –
We talked between the Rooms –
Until the Moss had reached our lips –
And covered up – our names"

8. The above poem, "I Died for Beauty" by Emily Dickinson, can best be summarized as which of the following?

- (A) Companionship yielding to the coldness of death
- (B) Failure to reach one's goals in life
- (C) Two lovers who are laid to rest side by side
- (D) A neglected cemetery
- (E) A longing to live life over again

"This is God's curse on slavery!—a bitter, bitter, most accursed thing!—a curse to the master and a curse to the slave! I was a fool to think I could make anything good out of such a deadly evil."

9. The above quote is from which of the following works?

- (A) Frederick Douglass' "The Heroic Slave"
- (B) Augustus Baldwin Longstreet's "Georgia Scenes, Characters, Incidents, Etc"
- (C) Harriet Beecher Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin"
- (D) William Wells Brown's "The Escape or, A Leap for Freedom"
- (E) James Russell Lowell's "The Present Crisis"

10. "Yarns Spun by a Nat'ral Born Durn'd Fool" is a partial title attributed to which of the following fictional characters?

- (A) Tom Sawyer
- (B) Ichabod Crane
- (C) Huckleberry Finn
- (D) Captain Boomer
- (E) Sut Lovingood

CLEP American Literature Practice Question Answer Key

1. C. Romanticism is the exaltation of the senses and emotions over reason and intellect. Answer (A) describes Naturalism; answer (B) describes Puritanism; answer (D) describes Realism; and answer (E) describes Transcendentalism.
2. A. In Walt Whitman's "A Noiseless Patient Spider," the poet uses alliteration in the third line of the first stanza by including the words "vacant" and "vast, " and in line 4 by the use of "forth " and the word "filament" three successive times.
3. D. In the second stanza, the poet uses metaphor to compare the speaker in the poem to a spider, the speaker's bond to a bridge, attachment to an anchor, and exploration to a gossamer thread.
4. B. Betrayal of a friend was not a theme in Herman Melville's "Moby Dick."
5. E. Ralph Waldo Emerson's definition of genius begins in the fourth line of "Self-Reliance."

6. D. "The Maypole of Merry Mount" by Nathaniel Hawthorne depicts the conflict and social tensions between the Merry Mount colonists and the Puritans.
7. B. Henry David Thoreau's "Walden" was an experiment in social isolation, therefore not an exercise in understanding the characteristics of others.
8. A. The kinship established between two deceased persons laid to rest side by side is gradually lost as overgrowth silences their speech and hides their identities.
9. C. This quote is from Chapter 5 of Harriet Beecher Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin."
10. E. The full title is "Sut Lovingood: Yarns Spun by a 'Nat'ral Born Durn'd Fool,'" by George Washington Harris.