Grade 11

English Language Arts

Assesslet

Informational/Explanatory
Directions

• Read all the directions for each question carefully and think about the answer.

• This Assesslet contains two passages and five items. Questions 1, 2, and 3 are selected-response items where you choose the one BEST answer. Answer each question by filling in the circle on your answer document.

• Question 4 is a constructed-response item. Write your answer on the lines provided on your answer document.

• Question 5 is an extended writing prompt. Use the scratch paper provided to plan your writing. Then, write your essay on the lines provided on your answer document.

• Be sure to write your answers in the spaces provided on the answer document.
Passage A: Harper’s Weekly Obituary Notice – Mark Twain

Harper’s Weekly, still published today under the name “Harper’s”, is a magazine focusing on culture, politics, and the arts. Below is the obituary that the magazine published in remembrance of the American writer Mark Twain. The date of publication was April 30, 1910. Twain died on April 21, 1910.

He had the great advantage of living his life fully out. Not only his years, but his energies were prolonged, until we may feel that he pretty well worked out what was in him. There will be few to question that he was the greatest American writer of his generation. What may be discussed is whether we have ever had his equal. We have had no one at all like him. If we must compare, we consider Hawthorne and Whitman. There is nobody else to put in the scales with Mark Twain.

It may be a platitude to say that he was a great writer because he was born with the necessary gifts. No one not so born ever became great in letters. What is interesting is that powers so remarkable should have been packed into the frame of a child born in an obscure village in Missouri, and should have developed in a life entirely dissociated from what we are used to think of as literary influences.

That is his great achievement, that he grasped a great mindful of American life, rough, joyous, and picturesque, and put it where it must stay, vital and permanent, but convenient for examination. There is no sign yet of a time when it will cease to be examined by crowds of searchers rejoicing in what they have found.
difficulties, his affections were deep and constant, his sympathies were ready; to the end of his days he was master of himself, equal to his task, faithful to his obligations, and an honorable and helpful man.

* A fetter or shackle, typically worn on the leg.
Passage B: Some of the Ills That Beset America’s Arch Jester

Published in the Colorado Springs Gazette on April 22, 1910, one day after Mark Twain’s death, the following chronology provides various details about Twain’s life. Over time, several of these details were confirmed to be false.

1860 (about) — Mark Twain loses his money, coat, trousers and boots playing cards with General Bunker.

1894 — His entire fortune is swept away in the failure of the publishing house of Charles L. Webster and company, which had been financed mainly by himself.

1896 — His eldest, most accomplished daughter, Olivia Susan Clemens, dies at the hour of her great promise, while her father is abroad.

1897 — Reported destitute and dying in London, friends in America raise a purse of $3000 for him, but he refuses to accept it, as his “case is not hopeless”.

1904 — His wife, “who was our life”, dies in Florence, Italy, whither the family had moved in the hope that the climate would restore her to health.

1907 — He loses his investment of $22,500 cash by the failure of the Plasmon Company of America, of which he was president and a director.


1909 — Illinois prevents his taking an active part in the Congo, a crusade which he had long prosecuted with his pen, with King Leopold of Belgium pictured as the arch offender.

1909 — Broken down by the strain of after-dinner speaking, Mark Twain is forced to leave New York and seek quiet and rest in his Connecticut villa.

1909 — The humorist and his daughter are involved in a humiliating controversy regarding a farm given to his former secretary, Mrs. Ralph W. Ashcroft, when Mr. Clemens attaches the property on his daughter’s advice.
1. Which of the following is an idea that is explored

A. Mark
B. Mark Twain was a man of integrity and honor.
C. Mark Twain led a life that was rich with experience.
D. Despite suffering much loss during his lifetime, Mark Twain still became a renowned author.

2. Which sentence from Passage A BEST shows

A. He had the great advantage of living his life fully out.
B. There will be few to question that he was the greatest American writer of his generation.
C. It may be a platitude to say that he was a great writer because he was born with the necessary gifts.
D. He loved truth, justice, and honor.
3. What is the **MAIN** purpose of Passage A?

A. to show the Twain was not a responsible person

B. to show the numerous hardships Twain faced during his lifetime

C. to show what some people believed about Mark Twain during his lifetime

D. to show that Twain had a difficult family life, which was reflected in his writing

4. The note at the beginning of Passage B says that many of the details Gazettes were later shown to be false. 

   Choose one detail from that makes you think this detail is false?

   Write your answer on the lines provided on your answer document.
5. Both the obituary in Passage A and the information in Passage B discuss the life of Mark Twain as a man and an author.

Write an informational essay that compares Mark Twain in Passage B. In your essay, be sure to:

- Use at least two details from each passage to discuss how the information about Mark Twain as a man and an author is similar in each passage.
- Use at least two details from each passage to discuss how the information about Mark Twain as a man and an author is different in each passage.

Use the scratch paper provided to plan your writing. Then, write your essay on the lines provided on your answer document.