

SAMPLE PROVINCIAL EXAM QUESTIONS FOR PART B

The following selection and comprehension questions were taken from the June 2002 Provincial Exam.

THE QUARTER HORSE COLTS

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- 1 Spring is the time of young life in ranch country—
the time when red cows drop their calves;
and the golden mares, the bays and buckskins
stand to suckle their young—
- 5 progeny born to the beauty of the flowing movement,
exquisite with small rounded bodies,
appealing miniatures of their quarter horse dams.
They frolic about on long colt legs,
upending tiny hoofs in half-kicks of ballet prance.
- 10 Innocently they turn their heads, ears pricked,
wary of my enthralled approach—
slow, slow lest I frighten them away.
The mares graze tranquilly, paying me no attention.
But their foals watch expectantly,
15 curious but poised for motherward flight.
- Apart, the bay mother of the smallest lowers her head,
arching her brown velvet neck,
running zephyr-like with him,
Teaching him with poignant gentleness.
- 20 Oh, I can never have enough of spring's returning vision
of the unspoiled young life in ranch country—
the tender grace of the little colts.

1. The phrase "the golden mares" (line 3) means the horses are
A. very young
B. deep yellow
C. extremely old
D. very expensive
2. At the end of stanza 1, the speaker compares the colts' frolicking to
A. playing
B. running
C. dashing
D. dancing
3. The mood established in the first stanza is
A. joyous
B. wistful
C. chaotic
D. humorous
4. "...[T]hey turn their heads, ears pricked," (line 10) suggests the foals are
A. content
B. grateful
C. terrified
D. suspicious
5. Line 18, "running zephyr-like with him," contains an example of
A. simile
B. metonymy
C. apostrophe
D. personification
6. Lines 20 and 21 suggest the narrator appreciates
A. the cycle of nature
B. the mares' gentleness
C. the clean environment
D. the absence of humans
7. In the poem, the foals primarily learn by
A. trial and error
B. human instruction
C. watching other colts
D. copying their mothers
8. The form of this poem is that of a(n)
A. ode
B. lyric
C. elegy
D. ballad

ANSWERS AND SOLUTIONS FOR SAMPLE PROVINCIAL EXAM QUESTIONS – PART B

1. B

To answer this kind of vocabulary comprehension question, be prepared to reread sections of the poem and to make *inferences* (judgements based on evidence). Although the answer may seem obvious, be careful with literal readings. Is *golden* really a colour in this poem?

- A. Incorrect. The mares suckle their young (line 4). If the mares have produced offspring, then they cannot themselves be very young.
- B. Correct. In line 2, the cows are described as red. In line 3, the mares are described as golden. We may infer that the colours are meant in their literal sense, and golden means deep yellow. Some readers may also know that *buckskin* horses are yellow, tan, or gold. (*Bays*, on the other hand, are reddish brown—this piece of knowledge would not be helpful)
- C. Incorrect. The mares suckle their young (line 4). If they have just produced offspring, they cannot be extremely old. Nor is there any connection between a golden colour and extreme age.
- D. Incorrect. Golden might be a poetic image for gold, and thus suggest money and expense. However, none of the other images in the poem suggest money. We would need more evidence before deciding that golden means expensive.

2. D

The answer to this question is straightforward. In order to find out what the speaker compares the *frollicking* with, read the end of stanza 1.

- D. The correct answer is *ballet*, which is a form of *dancing*.

3. A

In literature, *mood* is the feeling produced by a work. A writer produces mood through the images and associations attached to words, phrases, and figures of speech.

- A. Correct. *Joy* is great happiness. Images of beauty, flowing movement, frolic, and dance all suggest joy.
- B. Incorrect. A *wistful* mood is sad and yearning. The images in this stanza are too full of energy for a wistful mood.
- C. Incorrect. *Chaotic* means disordered and confused, but this stanza proceeds in a logical way from spring, to calving and suckling, to descriptions of colts at play.
- D. Incorrect. *Humorous* means funny or amusing or witty. The images in this stanza do not suggest humour. See (A).

4. D

The next word after “ears pricked,” (line 10) is *wary* (line 11).

- D. The colts are not content (A), grateful (B), or terrified (C). They are wary, or suspicious.

5. A

Running zephyr-like with him contains a figure of speech.

- A. Correct. A *simile* is a comparison using like or as. The mare's running is said to be *like* a zephyr (a gentle wind). The phrase contains a simile.
- B. Incorrect. *Metonymy* is a figure of speech that uses an attribute or something associated with something else to stand. For example, "Red" illustrates a use of metonymy when used as a nickname for a redhead.
- C. Incorrect. An *apostrophe*⁷ is a speech addressed to someone who is dead or absent, or to an inanimate object.
- D. Incorrect. *Personification* is the attribution of human characteristics to non-human things. Shakespeare's "Blow, blow, thou winter wind, / Thou art not so unkind / As man's ingratitude; / Thy tooth is not so keen..." contains both an apostrophe and personification.

6. A

This question requires interpretation of the speaker's feelings.

- A. Correct. The narrator's appreciation is suggested by *Oh, I can never have enough of*, and the cycle of nature is suggested by *spring's returning vision*.
- B. Incorrect. The mares are not mentioned in these two lines.
- C. Incorrect. *Unspoiled* might suggest a clean environment, but the word modifies *young life*, not the environment.
- D. Incorrect. Ranch country does suggest a few human beings, but not their absence.

7. D

There is one indirect reference to learning.

- D. In lines 16–19, the *bay mother* lowers her head to run with her foal, *teaching him*.

8. B

To answer this question, a knowledge of poetic forms is required.

- A. Incorrect. An *ode* is an expression of lofty emotion. Odes often celebrate an event or are addressed to nature or to some person, place, or thing.
- B. Correct. A *lyric* is a poem that expresses the emotions or thoughts of the writer. Sonnets, odes (A), elegies (C), and ballads (D) are examples of lyrics. (In modern use, lyric also means the words of a song)
- C. Incorrect. An *elegy* is a lyrical poetic form which deals with themes of mourning and loss. There are no such emotional appeals in the poem. Any thoughts of death or abandonment are countered by such lines as *the tender grace of the little colts*, which emphasizes the positive emotions of the work.
- D. Incorrect. A *ballad* is a lyrical poem which is generally intended to be sung aloud and tells a narrative story in a linear, or straightforward, manner. The poem is better understood to be a collection of *images* and *impressions*, rather than the *story* of the young colts.

⁷ Do not confuse this apostrophe with the punctuation mark (').