

Assessment Practice

ASSESS

The practice test items on the next few pages match skills listed on the Unit Goals page (page 845) and addressed throughout this unit. Taking this practice test will help you assess your knowledge of these skills and determine your readiness for the Unit Test.

REVIEW

After you take the practice test, your teacher can help you identify any skills you need to review.

- Author's Background
- Historical Context
- Sensory Details
- Cite Evidence
- Media: Political Cartoon
- Dictionary
- Suffixes
- Compound and Complex Sentences
- Gerunds Phrases

Reading Comprehension

DIRECTIONS Read these prose poems and the two supplementary selections about the historical and cultural context and the author. Use this background material to help you answer the questions that follow.

Freedom to Breathe

Alexander Solzhenitsyn

A shower fell in the night and now dark clouds drift across the sky, occasionally sprinkling a fine film of rain.

I stand under an apple tree in blossom and I breathe. Not only the apple tree but the grass round it glistens with moisture; words cannot describe the sweet fragrance that pervades the air. I inhale as deeply as I can, and the aroma invades my whole being; I breathe with my eyes open, I breathe with my eyes closed—I cannot say which gives me the greater pleasure.

This, I believe, is the single most precious freedom that prison takes away from us: the freedom to breathe freely, as I now can. No food on earth, no wine, not even a woman's kiss is sweeter to me than this air steeped in the fragrance of flowers, of moisture and freshness.

No matter that this is only a tiny garden, hemmed in by five-story houses like cages in a zoo. I cease to hear the motorcycles backfiring, radios whining, the burble of loudspeakers. As long as there is fresh air to breathe under an apple tree after a shower, we may survive a little longer.

The Bonfire and the Ants

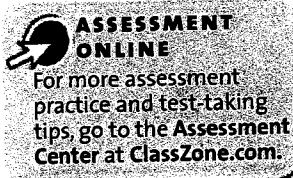
Alexander Solzhenitsyn

I threw a rotten log onto the fire without noticing that it was alive with ants.

The log began to crackle, the ants came tumbling out and scurried around in desperation. They ran along the top and writhed as they were scorched by the flames. I gripped the log and rolled it to one side. Many of the ants then managed to escape onto the sand or the pine needles.

But, strangely enough, they did not run away from the fire.

They had no sooner overcome their terror than they turned, circled, and some kind of force drew them back to their forsaken homeland. There were many who climbed back onto the burning log, ran about on it, and perished there.



Historical Background

In 1917, disgruntled Russian workers forced Czar Nicholas II to leave the throne. A year later, he and other members of the royal family were executed. Known as the Bolshevik Revolution, the uprising was led by Vladimir Lenin with the goal of creating a Communist state in which citizens would share in the common wealth. When Lenin died, his successor, Joseph Stalin, tightened state control over all aspects of life in the Soviet Union, including citizens' private lives. His economic policies were strictly enforced through successive Five-Year Plans. Many people were forced to give up their private lands to work on collective farms, while others had to relocate to cities to work in factories.

Stalin stifled political criticism through the use of propaganda, censorship, secret police, deportations, forced labor, and executions. A prominent feature of his regime was a network of forced labor camps known as the Gulag. By 1934, the Gulag's population numbered in the millions and included hardened criminals, as well as artists, political and religious dissenters, and prisoners of war. The main camps were located in remote regions where inmates worked on forestry, mining, and construction projects.

Many Communist Party members thought the Gulag went against the Bolshevik ideal of a workers' state—an ideal they believed could be restored when Stalin died. Critics viewed the Gulag as the essence of communism's evil core and a symbol of its repression.

During its nearly 40 years of operation, the Gulag had a deep economic and cultural impact on Soviet society. The prisoners gave the state a ready source of cheap labor to develop remote regions. At the same time, many people voiced their criticism of the harsh Soviet system—and their hope for a brighter future—in novels, memoirs, poems, and songs.

Author's Background

Alexander Solzhenitsyn was born in 1918. As a young man, he joined the Soviet army and fought in World War II, rising to the rank of captain. His fortunes changed in 1945, when he was sentenced to eight years of hard labor for criticizing Russian leader Joseph Stalin in a private letter. Because of his mathematical expertise, he served part of that sentence at a research institute before being transferred to a labor camp in Kazakhstan to work as a bricklayer. He was not allowed to return to Russia until 1956.

Solzhenitsyn transformed his harsh experiences in the labor camp into *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. In 1970, he received the Nobel Prize in literature for that work and other writings, all of which had been smuggled out of the country to avoid censorship. Three years later, the first volume of *The Gulag Archipelago*, his

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literary-historical account of the vast network of Soviet prison camps, was published in Paris. Upon its publication, the government charged him with treason. He was then deported in 1974. Eventually, Solzhenitsyn traveled to the United States and settled in Vermont, where he continued to write. Although he was welcomed in the United States, he didn't feel comfortable outside his homeland. His wife said, "They can separate a Russian writer from his native land, but no one has the power and strength to sever his spiritual link with it." He returned to Russia in 1994 after the collapse of the Soviet Union.



"Caution, comrades! He's armed with the most dangerous weapon in the Soviet Union!"

Comprehension

DIRECTIONS Use the Historical Background and Author's Background information to help you answer these questions about "Freedom to Breathe."

- Which experience in Solzhenitsyn's life most likely influenced him to write "Freedom to Breathe"?
 - serving as a soldier in World War II
 - being imprisoned in a Soviet labor camp
 - winning a Nobel Prize in literature
 - being deported from the Soviet Union
- Which details convey the sensation of "freshness" referred to in the poem?
 - "eyes open," "eyes closed"
 - "dark clouds," "cages in a zoo"
 - "a woman's kiss," "a burble of loudspeakers"
 - "a fine film of rain," "the fragrance of flowers"
- Which sensory detail creates a visual image of crowding?
 - "dark clouds"
 - "radios whining"
 - "cages in a zoo"
 - "an apple tree in blossom"
- Which statement is most clearly supported by images in the poem?
 - One can derive pleasure from simple things.
 - Freedom can be experienced only through nature.
 - Flowers are sweeter than a woman's kiss.
 - People live like caged animals.
- The connection made between freedom and breathing supports the idea that
 - nature holds the key to freedom
 - freedom is essential to life
 - people can live freely in a city
 - fresh air is as sweet as freedom

DIRECTIONS Use the Historical Background and Author's Background information to help you answer these questions about "The Bonfire and the Ants."

6. Which experience in Solzhenitsyn's life most likely influenced him to write the piece?
 - A living under a repressive government
 - B moving to the United States
 - C smuggling his writings out of the Soviet Union
 - D working as a bricklayer in Kazakhstan
7. Which group mentioned in the Historical Background material do the ants in the poem most likely represent?
 - A the secret police
 - B Soviet citizens
 - C hardened criminals
 - D the royal family
8. The log being tossed into the flames suggests what kind of event in Russian history?
 - A violent political upheaval
 - B tightening of government control
 - C termination of the Gulag
 - D rapid economic development
9. The "crackle" of the burning log in line 2 appeals to the reader's sense of
 - A taste C touch
 - B smell D hearing
10. Solzhenitsyn believes that a homeland has a powerful pull. You can find evidence of this belief in the image of the ants
 - A running away from the burning log
 - B scurrying around in desperation
 - C climbing back onto the burning log
 - D writhing in the flames

DIRECTIONS Use the Historical Background and Author's Background information to help you answer this question about both prose poems.

11. In the two poems, Solzhenitsyn uses contrasting images of nature to convey his feelings about
 - A truth and propaganda
 - B censorship and exile to a Gulag
 - C war and political unrest
 - D freedom and love of one's country

DIRECTIONS Answer this question about the cartoon.

12. Which statement best expresses the message of the political cartoon?
 - A Actions speak louder than words.
 - B A mind opens wider than a window.
 - C Three men are stronger than one man.
 - D Words are more powerful than weapons.

Written Response

SHORT RESPONSE Write three or four sentences to answer this question.

13. Which senses does the author use to experience freedom in "Freedom to Breathe"? Cite sensory details from the poem to support your choices.

EXTENDED RESPONSE Write two or three paragraphs to answer this question.

14. What can you infer about Solzhenitsyn's views on communism from "Freedom to Breathe" and "The Bonfire and the Ants"? Cite evidence from the Historical Background and Author's Background material to support your viewpoint.

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Vocabulary

DIRECTIONS Read this dictionary entry and answer the following questions.

film (fĭlm) *noun*. 1. A thin skin or membrane. 2. A thin covering or coating. 3. A thin sheet of flexible material, such as a cellulose derivative or a thermoplastic resin, coated with a photosensitive emulsion and used to make photographic negatives or transparencies. 4. A movie.—**film** *verb*. **filmed, film-ing, films** —*tr.* 1. To cover with a film. 2. To make a movie of. [Middle English, from Old English *filmen*.]

1. Which parts of speech can *film* be?
A noun and pronoun
B verb and adverb
C noun and verb
D noun, verb, and interjection
2. Which definition of the noun *film* is used in line 2 of "Freedom to Breathe"?
A definition 1
B definition 2
C definition 3
D definition 4
3. From which language does the word *film* originate?
A Modern English
B Old English
C Middle English
D uncertain origin

DIRECTIONS Use context clues and your knowledge of suffixes to answer the following questions.

4. What is the meaning of the word *moisture* as it is used in lines 4 and 11 of "Freedom to Breathe"?
A wetness
B dampen
C liquefy
D humidifier
5. What is the meaning of the word *fragrance* as it is used in line 5 of "Freedom to Breathe"?
A smelly
B scented
C aroma
D perfumed
6. What is the meaning of the word *desperation* as it is used in line 3 of "The Bonfire and the Ants"?
A great need
B a state of distress
C an aimless way
D an irrational manner