



**ST. JOSEPH’S UNIVERSITY, BANGALORE-27**

**BSc, BA, BSW, BCom, BBA, BVC GENERAL ENGLISH- II SEMESTER**

**SEMESTER EXAMINATION: MAY 2023**

**GE 221 – GENERAL ENGLISH**

**Time: 2 hours Max marks: 60**

**INSTRUCTIONS**

1. **Answer ANY ONE of the given themes.**
2. **This paper has 8 printed sides.**
3. **Adhere to the word limit, you will lose marks otherwise.**
4. **You are allowed to use a dictionary.**

**Theme I**

1. **Read the following excerpt of a short story by Theodore L. Thomas titled Test.**

Robert Proctor was a good driver for a young man. The Turnpike curved gently ahead of him, lightly traveled on this cool morning in May. He felt relaxed and alert. Two hours of driving had not yet produced the twinges of fatigue that appeared first in the muscles in the base of the neck. The sun was bright, but not glaring, and the air smelled fresh and clean. He breathed it deeply, and blew it out noisily. It was a good day for driving. He glanced quickly at the slim, gray-haired woman sitting in the front seat with him. Her mouth was curved in a quiet smile. She watched the trees and the fields slip by on her side of the pike. Robert Proctor immediately looked back at the road. He said, “Enjoying it, Mom?” “Yes, Robert.” Her voice was as cool as the morning. “It is very pleasant to sit here. I was thinking of the driving I did for you when you were little. I wonder if you enjoyed it as much as I enjoy this.” He smiled, embarrassed. “Sure I did.” She reached over and patted him gently on the arm, and then turned back to the scenery. He listened to the smooth purr of the engine. Up ahead he saw a great truck, spouting a geyser of smoke as it sped along the Turnpike. Behind it, not passing it, was a long blue convertible, content to drive in the wake of the truck. Robert Proctor noted the arrangement and filed it in the back of his mind. He was slowly overtaking them, but he would not reach them for another minute or two. He listened to the purr of the engine, and he was pleased with the sound. He had tuned that engine himself over the objections of the mechanic. The engine idled rough now, but it ran smoothly at high speed. You needed a special feel to do good work on engines, and Robert Proctor knew he had it. No one in the world had a feel like his for the tune of an engine. It was a good morning for driving, and his mind was filled with good thoughts. He pulled nearly abreast of the blue convertible and began to pass it. His speed was a few miles per hour above the Turnpike limit, but his car was under perfect control. The blue convertible suddenly swung out from behind the truck. It swung out without warning and struck his car near the right front fender, knocking his car to the shoulder on the left side of the Turnpike lane. Robert Proctor was a good driver, too wise to slam on the brakes. He fought the steering wheel to hold the car on a straight path. The left wheels sank into the soft left shoulder, and the car tugged to pull to the left and cross the island and enter the lanes carrying the cars heading in the opposite direction. He held it, then the wheel struck a rock buried in the soft dirt, and the left front tire blew out. The car slowed, and it was then that his mother began to scream. The car turned sideways and skidded part of the way out into the other lanes. Robert Proctor fought against the steering wheel to straighten the car, but the drag of the blown tire was too much. The scream rang steadily in his ears, and even as he strained at the wheel one part of his mind wondered coolly how a scream could so long be sustained without a breath. An oncoming car struck his radiator from the side and spun him viciously, full into the left-hand lanes. He was flung into his mother’s lap, and she was thrown against the right door. It held. With his left hand he reached for the steering wheel and pulled himself erect against the force of the spin. He turned the wheel to the left, and tried to stop the spin and careen out of the lanes of oncoming traffic. His mother was unable to right herself; she lay against the door, her cry rising and falling with the eccentric spin of the car. The car lost some of its momentum. During one of the spins he twisted the wheel straight, and the car wobblingly stopped spinning and headed down the lane. Before Robert Proctor could turn it off the pike to safety a car loomed ahead of him, bearing down on him. There was a man at the wheel of that other car, sitting rigid, unable to move, eyes wide and staring and filled with fright. Alongside the man was a girl, her head against the back of the seat, soft curls framing a lovely face, her eyes closed in easy sleep. It was not the fear in the man that reached into Robert Proctor; it was the trusting helplessness in the face of the sleeping girl. The two cars sped closer to each other, and Robert Proctor could not change the direction of his car. The driver of the other car remained frozen at the wheel. At the last moment Robert Proctor sat motionless staring into the face of the onrushing, sleeping girl, his mother’s cry still sounding in his ears. He heard no crash when the two cars collided head-on at a high rate of speed. He felt something push into his stomach, and the world began to go gray. Just before he lost consciousness he heard the scream stop, and he knew then that he had been hearing a single, short-lived scream that had only seemed to drag on and on. There came a painless wrench, and then darkness. Robert Proctor seemed to be at the bottom of a deep black well. There was a spot of faint light in the far distance, and he could hear the rumble of a distant voice. He tried to pull himself toward the light and the sound, but the effort was too great. He lay still and gathered himself and tried again. The light grew brighter and the voice louder. He tried harder, again, and he drew closer. Then he opened his eyes full and looked at the man sitting in front of him. “You all right, Son?” asked the man. He wore a blue uniform, and his round, beefy face was familiar. Robert Proctor tentatively moved his head, and discovered he was seated in a reclining chair, unharmed, and able to move his arms and legs with no trouble. He looked around the room, and he remembered. The man in the uniform saw the growing intelligence in his eyes and he said, “No harm done, Son. You just took the last part of your driver’s test.” Robert Proctor focused his eyes on the man. Though he saw the man clearly, he seemed to see the faint face of the sleeping girl in front of him. The uniformed man continued to speak. “We put you through an accident under hypnosis—do it to everybody these days before they can get their driver’s licenses. Makes better drivers of them, more careful drivers the rest of their lives. Remember it now? Coming in here and all?”

**I.A. Answer the following about 5 sentences each: (6x5=30)**

1. Give the above story an alternate title. Give reasons for your answer.
2. How would your perception of the story change if you were told that this was a hypnotic test for a driver's license in the beginning of the story?
3. What do you think is the role of the mother in this story?
4. What is the ending you were expecting in this story?
5. What are you able to say about Robert Proctor, the driver,given how he handled the accident?
6. How do you think someone from Bangalore would respond to a driving test like this?

**I.B. Answer theANY THREE of following in about 150 words each: (3x10=30)**

1. Write out a list of your emotions as the story progressed? Narrate this shift in your response to the story as you were reading it.
2. How would you respond in a moment of crisis? How would you describe yourself in a crisis situation?
3. Have you been witness to road rage? Narrate one such incident.
4. Do you think driving/riding is a good idea or a necessary life skill, given the time of taxicabs and metro, traffic and potholes? Why?

**Theme II**

**I. Read the following short story by Shinichi Hoshi titled “He-y, Come on Ou-t!”**

The typhoon had passed and the sky was a gorgeous blue. Even a certain village not far from the city had suffered damage. A little distance from the village and near the mountains, a small shrine had been swept away by a landslide. "I wonder how long that shrine’s been here." "Well, in any case, it must have been here since an awfully long time ago." "We’ve got to rebuild it right away." While the villagers exchanged views, several more of their number came over. "It sure was wrecked." "I think it used to be right here." "No, looks like it was a little more over there." Just then, one of them raised his voice. "Hey what in the world is this hole?" Where they had all gathered there was a hole about a meter in diameter. They peered in, but it was so dark nothing could be seen. However, it gave one the feeling that it was so deep it went clear through to the center of the earth. There was even one person who said, "I wonder if it’s a fox’s hole." "He—y, come on ou—t!" shouted a young man into the hole. There was no echo from the bottom. Next he picked up a pebble and was about to throw it in. "You might bring down a curse on us. Lay off," warned an old man, but the younger one energetically threw the pebble in. As before, however, there was no answering response from the bottom. The villagers cut down some trees, tied them with rope and made a fence which they put around the hole. Then they repaired to the village. "What do you suppose we ought to do?" "Shouldn’t we build the shrine up just as it was over the hole?" A day passed with no agreement. The news traveled fast and a car from the newspaper company rushed over. In no time a scientist came out and, with an all-knowing expression on his face, he went over to the hole. Next, a bunch of gawking curiosity seekers showed up; one could also pick out here and there men of shifty glances who appeared to be concessionaires. Concerned that someone might fall into the hole, a policeman from the local substation kept a careful watch. One newspaper reporter tied a weight to the end of a long cord and lowered it into the hole. A long way down it went. The cord ran out, however, and he tried to pull it out, but it would not come back up. Two or three people helped out, but when they all pulled too hard the cord parted at the edge of the hole. Another reporter, a camera in hand, who had been watching all of this, quietly untied a stout rope that had been wound around his waist. The scientist contacted people at his laboratory and had them bring out a high-powered bullhorn, with which he was going to check out the echo from the hole’s bottom. He tried switching through various sounds, but there was no echo. The scientist was puzzled, but he could not very well give up with everyone watching him so intently. He put the bullhorn right up to the hole, turned it to its highest volume, and let it sound continuously for a long time. It was a noise that would have carried several dozen kilometers above ground. But the hole just calmly swallowed up the sound. In his own mind, the scientist was at a loss, but with a look of apparent composure he cut off the sound and, in a manner suggesting that the whole thing had a perfectly plausible explanation, said simply, "Fill it in." Safer to get rid of something one didn’t understand. The onlookers, disappointed that this was all that was going to happen, prepared to disperse. Just then one of the concessionaires, having broken through the throng and came forward, made a proposal. "Let me have that hole. I’ll fill it in for you." "We’d be grateful to you for filling it in," replied the mayor of the village, "but we can’t very well give you the hole. We have to build a shrine there." "If it’s a shrine you want, I’ll build you a fine one later. Shall I make it with an attached meeting hall?" Before the mayor could answer, the people of the village all shouted out. "Really? Well, in that case, we ought to have it closer to the village." "It’s just an old hole. We’ll give it to you!" So it was settled. And the mayor, of course, had no objection. The concessionaire was true to his promise. It was small, but closer to the village he did build for them a shrine with an attached meeting hall. About the time the autumn festival was held at the new shrine, the hole-filling company established by the concessionaire hung out its small shingle at a shack near the hole. The concessionaire had his cohorts mount a loud campaign in the city. "We’ve got a fabulously deep hole! Scientists say it’s at least five thousand meters deep! Perfect for the disposal of such things as waste from nuclear reactors." Government authorities granted permission. Nuclear power plants fought for contracts. The people of the village were a bit worried about this, but they consented when it was explained that there would be absolutely no above-ground contamination for several thousand years and that they would share in the profits. Into the bargain, very shortly a magnificent road was built from the city to the village. Trucks rolled in over the road, transporting lead boxes. Above the hole the lids were opened and the wastes from nuclear reactors tumbled away into the hole. From the Foreign Ministry and the Defense Agency, boxes of unnecessary classified documents were brought for disposal. Officials who came to supervise the disposal held discussions on golf. The lesser functionaries, as they threw in the papers, chatted about pinball. The hole showed no signs of filling up. It was awfully deep, thought some; or else it might be very spacious at the bottom. Little by little, the hole-filling company expanded its business. Bodies of animals used in contagious disease experiments at the universities were brought out and to these were added the unclaimed corpses of vagrants. Better than dumping all of its garbage in the ocean, went the thinking in the city, and plans were made for a long pipe to carry it to the hole. The hole gave peace of mind to the dwellers of the city. They concentrated solely on producing one thing after another. Everyone disliked thinking about the eventual consequences. People wanted only to work for production companies and sales corporations; they had no interest in becoming junk dealers. But, it was thought, these problems too would gradually be resolved by the hole. Young girls whose betrothals had been arranged discarded old diaries in the hole. There were also those who were inaugurating new love affairs and threw into the hole old photographs of themselves taken with former sweethearts. The police felt comforted as they used the hole to get rid of accumulations of expertly done counterfeit bills. Criminals breathed easier after throwing material evidence into the hole. Whatever one wished to discard, the hole accepted it all. The hole cleansed the city of its filth; the sea and sky seemed to have become a bit clearer than before. Aiming at the heavens, new buildings went on being constructed one after the other. One day, atop the high steel frame of a new building under construction, a workman was taking a break. Above his head he heard a voice shout: "He—y, come on ou—t!" But, in the sky to which he lifted his gaze there was nothing at all. A clear blue sky merely spread over all. He thought it must be his imagination. Then, as he resumed his former position, from the direction where the voice had come, a small pebble skimmed by him and fell on past. The man, however, was gazing in idle reverie at the city’s skyline growing ever more beautiful, and he failed to notice.

**I. A. Answer the following questions in about 5 sentences each: (6x5=30)**

1. What do you think the hole in the story signifies?
2. Dramatic irony occurs when the audience or readers know more about a situation than the character does. What evidence are you able to find of this in the story?
3. Another reporter, a camera in hand, who had been watching all of this, quietly untied a stout rope that had been wound around his waist. What do you think this reporter had planned on doing? Why did he decide against it?
4. If you had access to a hole such as this, what are some of the things that you would like to dispose off?
5. Life is like a boomerang, whatever you do comes back to you. The above statement is a good example of what the story stands for. Come up with two more statements for this story.
6. Are you guilty of mindless disposal? Why do you think our parents’s generation did not have to worry about this?

**I.B. Answer the following in about 150 words each: (3x10=30)**

1. Garbage can teach us a lot about a person’s life because it is evidence of culture and habits. Do you agree or disagree? Give reasons for your answer.
2. If you sorted through the contents of your bin, what would you learn about yourself? Describe yourself purely based on the contents of your garbage bin.
3. Do you really think there is a climate crisis coming? Why do you think so? As a College student, make a poster explaining this.

**Theme III**

**I. Read this short story by Tara Campbell titled *Angels and Blueberries***

“Why is the sky blue?” you ask.

Well, it all depends on who’s answering.

If you ask a grown-up, you’ll probably get an answer about light, and how it bounces off air particles, and how certain wavelengths (i.e. colors) get absorbed, and certain colors (i.e. wavelengths) get kicked back out, and those certain colors/wavelengths (i.e. blue) are the ones that you and I can see.

If you ask a scientist, you’ll likely get an even more confusing but way more convincing version of that answer.

But if you ask a writer, you’ll get a different answer every time.

One answer, for example, lies with the special properties of blue fingerpaint. Whenever children use blue paint, tiny particles of it dissolve from their hands into the air and color it blue. Over time the pigment fades, but as long as there is fingerpainting, there will always be blue sky.

Another answer is related to the blue-eyed creatures at the North and South Poles. They are always looking up into the sky, and the blue of their eyes reflects back for the whole world to see. You’ve probably never heard of these polar creatures because they know how to hide from satellites and explorers. The reflection of their eyes is all we’ll ever see of them.

But the answer I think is true right now concerns angels and blueberries.

You see, blueberries are the angels’ favourite food. There’s nothing they like more; and berries are healthy, so it’s a happy coincidence. The only problem is, angels are sloppy eaters, and they eat pretty much all day. Of course they do other things like play the harp and sing and keep little babies from getting into the bleach under the sink. But they still have lots of time to munch on blueberries—they live forever, after all—so little bits of blueberry wind up all over the sky.

Even worse, some angels don’t like the blueberry skins, so they peel each berry before eating it and toss the skins to the side. This doesn’t make them blatant litterers, mind you—they know they’ll get around to picking up the skins, just not at that very moment.

So as the day goes on, the angels eat more and more berries; and as the sun goes down, its light reflects through the berry pulp and juice, creating wonderful reds and oranges and yellows. And still the angels eat, and the sky grows darker and darker with blue skins and bits of berry. The angels keep on munching until, with the exception of little gaps for the moon and stars, no light can get to the Earth at all. In fact, there’s not even enough room for the moon most of the time, which is why you only see the whole thing once a month.

In the middle of the night God finally has enough, and she tells the angels they have to start cleaning up their mess. Of course they start right away, but it’s a big mess and it takes a while. And as they clean, you can see a little bits of light start to penetrate the layer of blueberry waste. Dawn begins as they wipe and scrub, and daylight breaks when they finally clear away enough blueberries for the sun to shine on the Earth again.

The one problem is that blueberry skins stain, and the angels can’t scrub the traces away completely. Some days they do better, and the sky is light blue. But on very sunny days you can see the full extent of the staining and the sky is a rich, dark blue. But God isn’t that concerned about the stains. She actually thinks they’re pretty, and the renters down on the surface don’t mind, and she’s not planning on moving anytime soon, so it’s not like she has to worry about resale value. What matters to her is that the angels did their best.

Now, you may wonder what would happen if the angels ever got tired of blueberries. What would happen if they switched to raspberries? Would the sky eventually wind up purple? If they started eating bananas, would the yellow peels turn the blue sky green? Or if they developed a fondness for lemons, would the juice bleach the colour out forever? And if that happened, would your grandchildren ever believe the sky had once been blue?

Or would they just think you were a silly writer telling stories about angels and blueberries?

**I.A. Answer the following questions in about 5 sentences each: (6x5=30)**

1. Which one of the above explanations for the sky being blue do you prefer? Why?

2. ‘But if you ask a writer, you’ll get a different answer every time.’ Why does the writer mean here?

3. Why do you think God is referred to as a ‘she’ in this story? What does that do to your understanding of God or to the popular notion of God?

4. Would you categorise this story as one for children? How do you think an adult would receive such a story?

5. What were some of the questions you asked as a child, about nature and other things around you? List at least 5 of them.

6. What were some of the things you believed as a child that changed completely when you grew up?

**II. Answer the following in about 150 words each: (2x15=30)**

7. If you could come up with an explanation as amusing as the one above for the sky being blue, what would it be?

8. The last line of the story says ‘…silly writer telling stories about angels and blueberries.’ Who would you call a ‘silly writer’? Is there anything that could be termed as silly writing? Give reasons for your answer.