"The Tell-Tale Heart" Test

Multiple Choice
Identify the choice that best completes the statement or answers the question.

Critical Reading
Identify the letter of the choice that best answers the question.

1. Reread these lines from the beginning of “The Tell-Tale Heart”:

You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing. But you should have seen me. You should have seen how wisely I proceeded—with what caution—....
Which of the following questions might a reader of that passage have?

a. Is the narrator lonely?
b. Is the narrator insane?
c. Will the narrator's story be long or short?
d. Will the narrator find true love?

2. What is it about the old man that scares and angers the narrator of “The Tell-Tale Heart”?

a. his clouded blue eye
b. his old house
c. his children
d. his pet snake

3. What does the old man in “The Tell-Tale Heart” do when he hears a noise on the eighth night?

a. He reaches for a gun.
b. He begins to sob with terror.
c. He walks to the door.
d. He sits up and asks who is there.

4. The narrator of “The Tell-Tale Heart” chuckles at the old man's fear. What does this response tell you about the narrator?

a. He likes comedy.
b. He is impatient.
c. He is cruel.
d. He is tired.

5. Where does the narrator of “The Tell-Tale Heart” hide the old man's body?

a. in a grave in the backyard
b. in a closet
c. under a pile of blankets
d. under the floorboards
6. In “The Tell-Tale Heart,” why does a neighbor call the police to the house?
   a. He heard a shriek.
   b. He heard a loud, repetitive thumping.
   c. He saw the murder through a window.
   d. He saw the murder in a dream.

7. What does the narrator of “The Tell-Tale Heart” want people to think about him?
   a. He wants people to think he is pleasant.
   b. He wants people to think he is crazy.
   c. He wants people to think he is intelligent and patient.
   d. He wants people to think he is angry at the old man.

8. What does the narrator start to think he hears as “The Tell-Tale Heart” progresses?
   a. the roar of the ocean
   b. the sounds of neighbors
   c. a heart beating
   d. the old man's increasingly loud groans

9. On the eighth night, the narrator of “The Tell-Tale Heart” grows furious. How do the old man's feelings contrast with the narrator's?
   a. The old man is calm.
   b. The old man is fearful.
   c. The old man is joyful.
   d. The old man is bored.

10. As “The Tell-Tale Heart” progresses, how does the narrator's mood change?
   a. He becomes increasingly puzzled.
   b. He becomes increasingly excited.
   c. He becomes increasingly calm.
   d. He becomes increasingly happy.

11. Why does the narrator finally confess to the murder?
   a. He wants to shock the police officers.
   b. He thinks the officers hear the heartbeat and are mocking him.
   c. The neighbor hears a shriek.
   d. He wants to be rewarded for the intelligence of his murder plan.

Vocabulary and Grammar

12. Which word is closest in meaning to acute?
   a. dull
   b. close
   c. previous
   d. sharp
13. Expressing ridicule or contempt can be called
   a. attention.
   b. derision.
   c. revision.
   d. distinctness.

14. Which verb is in the past tense?
   a. ate
   b. eat
   c. laugh
   d. run

15. In which sentence is ceased used inappropriately?
   a. After the rain ceased, the sun came out.
   b. When the teacher told us to be quiet, we ceased talking.
   c. When we were full, we ceased eating.
   d. When it got cold, we ceased wearing our jackets.

Critical Reading

Identify the letter of the choice that best completes the statement or answers the question.

16. What statement about the narrator is not reasonable, based on the following passage from “The Tell-Tale Heart”?
   True!—nervous—very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses—not destroyed—not dulled them.
   a. The narrator is probably tired.
   b. The narrator is probably insane.
   c. The narrator is nervous.
   d. The narrator has a disease.

17. Why does the narrator of “The Tell-Tale Heart” want to kill the old man?
   a. He wants the old man's money.
   b. He hates the old man's clouded blue eye.
   c. He is tired of the old man's complaints.
   d. He wants the house to himself.

18. Why does the narrator of “The Tell-Tale Heart” greet the old man so heartily every morning?
   a. because he really cares for him
   b. out of habit
   c. because he is a cheerful fellow
   d. to reassure the old man
19. On what character traits does the narrator of “The Tell-Tale Heart” pride himself?

   a. his abilities to lie and steal
   b. his sneakiness and his fear
   c. his wit and his confidence
   d. his intelligence and his patience

20. What does the narrator's action as described in the following sentence from “The Tell-Tale Heart” tell you about him?

   It took me an hour to place my whole head within the opening so far that I could see him as he lay upon his bed.

   a. He is very frightened.
   b. He is very intelligent.
   c. He is very tired.
   d. He is very cautious.

21. On opening the door to the old man's room on the eighth night, the narrator of “The Tell-Tale Heart” feels

   a. unexpectedly frightened.
   b. unexpectedly powerful.
   c. no different than usual.
   d. a slight chill.

22. In “The Tell-Tale Heart,” what is different about the old man's reaction to the narrator's intrusion on the eighth night?

   a. He is armed.
   b. He seems unconcerned.
   c. He wakes up and asks who is there.
   d. He invites the man to sit down and talk.

23. What characteristic of the narrator of “The Tell-Tale Heart” is evident in the following sentence?

   I knew what the old man felt, and pitied him, although I chuckled at heart.

   a. cruelty
   b. insanity
   c. sense of humor
   d. excitability

24. Why does the narrator of “The Tell-Tale Heart” cast a beam of light on the old man's face?

   a. to look at the old man's eye
   b. to shock the old man
   c. to make his way over to the bed
   d. to reassure the old man
25. Why does the sound of the old man's groan in the middle of the night sound familiar to the narrator of “The Tell-Tale Heart”?

a. The narrator himself has groaned in terror in the night.
b. The old man often groans.
c. The old man's groan sounds like the wind blowing, a sound the narrator often hears.
d. The old man often has disturbing dreams.

26. In “The Tell-Tale Heart,” how do the narrator's feelings contrast with the old man's?

a. The narrator is afraid of the old man, and the old man is confident.
b. The narrator feels fury toward the old man, and the old man feels fear.
c. The narrator is overwhelmed, and the old man is calm.
d. The narrator is joyful, and the old man is angry.

27. In “The Tell-Tale Heart,” why do the officers stay after they search the house and find nothing suspicious?

a. to have breakfast with the narrator
b. to search the room more carefully
c. to wait for their superior officer
d. to talk further with the narrator

28. What sound is being described in the following passage from “The Tell-Tale Heart”?

… a low, dull, quick sound, such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton.

a. the distant roar of the ocean
b. the beating of a heart
c. the narrator's watch ticking
d. the pounding of the police at the door

29. The sound that drives the narrator of “The Tell-Tale Heart” to confess is

a. created by the police to trap the narrator.
b. coming from the neighbors next door.
c. possibly the narrator's heart pounding.
d. a shutter beating rhythmically in the wind.

30. Throughout “The Tell-Tale Heart,” the narrator gradually is taken over by

a. headaches.
b. fears for his life.
c. greed for the old man's money.
d. his madness.

31. In which sentence is acute used correctly?

a. The new car is stylish and acute.
b. Stacy's pain from the fall was acute.
c. Mac's haircuts are always acute.
d. The cat's purr was acute.