

## PASSAGE II

## INSTRUCTIONS:

Read the passage carefully and answer the questions that follow. ALL questions must be answered in complete sentences and in your own words unless otherwise indicated.

All answers must be based on information in the passage. Special attention should be given to the directions for each question.

## FOUR MILES TO PINECONE

I'm not the **scholarly** type, so you may be wondering why I'm sitting here in the public library with a ballpoint pen and a notebook.

It all started back in June, on the last day of school. Mouse Brown and I stood by our lockers comparing report cards. I had an F in English and so did Mouse. I knew my parents would have a fit, and I asked Mouse 5 to go with me to see Mr. Singleton. I thought we might talk him into changing our grades.

But Mouse said no. He said flunking English didn't make any difference to him. So I went alone.

"Thomas," Mr. Singleton said, "I know why you're here. You are less than satisfied with your grade."

"I'm in a state of shock," I said.

"All is not lost, Thomas. Pull up a desk and be seated. We shall talk. Nothing is hopeless."

10 "That's what I came to hear," I said. I sat down. He put on his glasses and gave me the same repulsive smile he always gives students who talk out of turn or carve on desks. It's the only smile he's got, and he shows a lot of crooked gray teeth. He's the only teacher I know who can reprimand a student simply by smiling at him. You'd rather behave yourself than look at those teeth a second time.

15 "Mr. Singleton," I said, "I deserve better than an F in English. I did great on all your tests. I know everything you teach, and here you flunk me. How can you get away with that?"

"Please do not question my judgment," he said. "Now it's true that you know a great deal about what I teach, but you have one vast weakness — one vast flaw — in an otherwise adequate mentality."

20 "What's that?"

"You lack perseverance, my good young man."

25 "What's that?"

"Perseverance is another word for what you didn't show by failing to hand in your assignments. Would you care to estimate the number of written assignments you failed to hand in during the year?"

"I know I skipped a few. Ten or twelve."

30 "Guess again."

"Maybe twenty. But I had a job, Mr. Singleton. I couldn't always find time to do them."

He opened his grade book and said, "Look at this," and pushed it across his desk. "Forty-seven," he said.

35 "Forty-seven?" I said. I pretended to be surprised but I knew he was right. I had decided early in the year that I wouldn't trouble myself with English assignments, because English always came pretty easy for me, and I figured I could get by with at least a C by simply showing up for class and taking the tests. English assignments, if you take them seriously, can really curb your free time.

He insisted I look at his grade book. With a dirty fingernail, he was pointing to my name. Sure enough, except for the A's and B's I got on tests, every little square after my name was blank. Forty-seven of them.

40 "Those A's and B's don't average out to F," I said. I wasn't about to capitulate.

45 "Those forty-seven empty squares stand for forty-seven F's." He was getting nasty now, so I decided to stop reasoning and begin to play on his sympathy — even tell a lie or two if I had to. I told him my father would come after me with a leather strap. I told him I might lose my job at the grocery store. My mother might die of grief. I told him I might have to drop out of high school because I couldn't afford the extra time it would take to make up his course.

When I got to the part about my mother, he realised I was spreading it pretty thick. That's when he gave me a big horrible smile.

45 "Thomas," he said, "I have a plan. That F can be changed to the B you're capable of earning — if you will write one long story in a mature style and free of mechanical errors. I will give you the whole summer to finish it. If you bring it to me on the first day of school next fall, I will change your grade."

45 "But in the summer I work full time in the grocery store. I'm not sure I'd have the time to work on English."

"If you wish to pass the course you will find the time. It will be up to you. It is your one chance."

"Well, maybe I can work it out. Just tell a story in writing — is that it?"

"Yes. A story of some length."



"What length?"  
"Forty-seven pages," he said. And smiled.

by John Hassler (1993)  
New York: Penguin

27. What is the name of the narrator?

[1]

28. Quote a phrase from between lines 1–6 which supports the statement that the narrator is recalling past events.

[1]

29. Using appropriate words to describe Mouse and the narrator's attitude to their grades, identify ONE way in which the boys differ as students.

[2]

30. The narrator uses the phrase "play on his sympathy" in line 35.

(a) In your own words, explain this phrase.

[1]

(b) Identify TWO ways in which the narrator attempts to play on Mr. Singleton's sympathy.

[2]

31. Mr. Singleton offers the narrator a bargain. Does the narrator accept or refuse this bargain? Explain how you know.

[2]



32. Read the following substitute titles for the passage, and tick [✓] the one which is most appropriate.

(a) \_\_\_\_\_ "Abandoned by my Friend Mouse"  
 (b) \_\_\_\_\_ "The Year I Failed High School"  
 (c) \_\_\_\_\_ "Mr. Singleton's Accurate Records"  
 (d) \_\_\_\_\_ "An Unusual Teacher-Student Conference" [1]

33. Using the lines provided, explain the meaning of THREE of the following words or phrases as they are used in the passage:

(a) scholarly type (line 1) \_\_\_\_\_  
 (b) reprimand (line 12) \_\_\_\_\_  
 (c) vast (line 17) \_\_\_\_\_  
 (d) curb (line 30) \_\_\_\_\_  
 (e) capitulate (line 33) \_\_\_\_\_ [3]

34. The table below contains a number of character traits, three of which best describe the narrator. Identify the THREE traits that best describe him, and then provide evidence from the passage to support each one of these three ways of describing him.

SUGGESTED CHARACTER TRAITS	SUPPORT
(a) dishonest	
(b) anti-social	
(c) loyal	
(d) disrespectful/insulting	
(e) determined	

[3]



35. Explain why you would let the narrator's grade remain an F. Provide at least **FOUR** specific reasons and base your response on information from the passage.

Your answer should be paragraphed, using NO MORE THAN 100 words.

[7]

**TOTAL MARKS = [23]**