

Multiple Choice Practice - A Soliloquy from Richard II

by Shakespeare

Questions 16-29. Read the following speech carefully before you choose your answers.

[The speaker of the following passage, King Richard, has been deposed and imprisoned by Bolingbroke.]

I have been studying how I may compare
This prison where I live unto the world:
And for because the world is populous,
And here is not a creature but myself,
(5) I cannot do it; yet I'll hammer it out.
My brain I'll prove the female to my soul:
My soul the father: and these two beget
A generation of still-breeding thoughts,
And these same thoughts people this little world
(10) In humours like the people of this world,
For no thought is contented. The better sort,
As thoughts of things divine, are intermix'd
With scruples,* and do set the word itself
Against the word:
(15) As thus: 'Come, little ones;' and then again,
'It is as hard to come as for a camel
To thread the postern of a needle's eye.'
Thoughts tending to ambition, they do plot
Unlikely wonders; how these vain weak nails
(20) May tear a passage through the flinty ribs
Of this hard world, my ragged prison walls;
And, for they cannot, die in their own pride.
Thoughts tending to content flatter themselves
That they are not the first of fortune's slaves,
(25) Nor shall not be the last; like silly beggars
Who sitting in the stocks refuge their shame,
That many have and others must sit there:
And in this thought they find a kind of ease,
Bearing their own misfortune on the back
(30) Of such as have before endur'd the like.
Thus play I in one person many people,
And none contented: sometimes am I king;
Then treason makes me wish myself a beggar,
And so I am: then crushing penury
(35) Persuades me I was better when a king;
Then am I king'd again: and by and by
Think that I am unking'd by Bolingbroke,
And straight am nothing: but whate'er I be
Nor I nor any man that but man is
(40) With nothing shall be pleas'd, till he be eas'd
With being nothing.

*doubts

16. The phrase "prove the female" (line 6) emphasizes which of the following?

- (A) The delicacy of the soul
- (B) The brain's ability to conceive
- (C) The soul's intuitive nature
- (D) The feminine nature of the artist
- (E) The need to be merciful

17. In lines 6-8, there is an implied comparison between thoughts and

- (A) reasons
- (B) walls
- (C) children
- (D) artisans
- (E) humors

18. In lines 10-11, King Richard implies that "the people of this world" are

- (A) more fortunate than he is
- (B) dissatisfied and temperamental
- (C) impassive and unfeeling
- (D) inclined to generosity
- (E) gullible and unwise

19. In lines 15-17, King Richard makes use of

- (A) metaphysical conceits
- (B) Biblical allusions
- (C) understatement
- (D) oxymoron
- (E) self-parody

20. The two quotations in lines 15-17 are seen by King Richard as

- (A) contradictory
- (B) comforting
- (C) absurd
- (D) trite
- (E) clever

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE

21. King Richard's "Thoughts tending to ambition" (line 18) are not comforting because they
- (A) propose an impossible task
 - (B) recount a problem from the past
 - (C) foretell another deposition
 - (D) constitute a criminal act
 - (E) present a paradoxical solution
22. In line 25, the "silly beggars" are mentioned as which of the following?
- (A) Subjects who loved Richard in former times
 - (B) Part of the rabble that opposes legitimate authority
 - (C) People in a condition analogous to Richard's present state
 - (D) The common people who form the backbone of the nation
 - (E) Criminals who have committed acts similar to Richard's own deeds
23. In line 28, "this thought" refers to the idea that the
- (A) world is ages old
 - (B) plight is not without precedent
 - (C) monarchy cannot remain unprincipled for long
 - (D) time will come when the crime will be forgiven
 - (E) best comfort lies in one's own mind
24. When King Richard says "Then am I king'd again" (line 36), he means that he
- (A) has once again been topped by Bolingbroke
 - (B) has gained a spiritual kingdom to replace his worldly one
 - (C) perceives the true value of kingship
 - (D) imagines that he is a monarch once again
 - (E) can do without the external trappings of royalty
25. In line 38, "straight" is best interpreted as meaning
- (A) uncomplicated
 - (B) honest
 - (C) clearly
 - (D) implicitly
 - (E) immediately
26. Which of the following best restates the meaning of lines 39-41?
- (A) Nothing that the world can provide can make the average person content.
 - (B) Only someone who has lost everything can understand the importance of possessions.
 - (C) A king must understand that he too is mortal before he can find solace.
 - (D) Only after death can a mere mortal be satisfied with having nothing.
 - (E) A deposed king can find true comfort only in his mind.
27. In the passage, King Richard uses language primarily to
- (A) consider his plight
 - (B) soothe his conscience
 - (C) justify his wrongdoing
 - (D) assail his enemies
 - (E) recreate the past
28. In the passage, King Richard reflects on all of the following EXCEPT
- (A) religion
 - (B) others' misfortunes
 - (C) escape
 - (D) deposition
 - (E) revenge
29. In the passage, King Richard exhibits which of the following?
- (A) Social and political astuteness
 - (B) Verbal and rhetorical facility
 - (C) Single-minded intensity
 - (D) Narrow-minded prejudice
 - (E) Clear and unwavering judgment

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE 