

Excerpt from *The Tragedy of Hamlet: Prince of Denmark* by William Shakespeare

When *Hamlet* begins, Hamlet's father, the King of Denmark, has suddenly died, leaving his mother, Queen Gertrude, to rule as a single, female monarch. Almost immediately after the King's death, however, she remarries. Surprisingly, her new husband, Claudius, is the recently deceased King's brother and Hamlet's uncle. In the following passage, taken from Act 3, Scene 4, Hamlet confronts his mother.

HAMLET

Now, mother, what's the matter?

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

HAMLET

Mother, you have my father much offended.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue.

HAMLET

Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Why, how now, Hamlet!

HAMLET

What's the matter now?

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Have you forgot me?

HAMLET

No, by the rood, not so:

You are the queen, your husband's brother's wife;
And (would it were not so!) you are my mother.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Nay, then, I'll set those to you that can speak.

HAMLET

Come, come, and sit you down; you shall not budge;
You go not till I set you up a glass
Where you may see the inmost part of you.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

What wilt thou do? Thou wilt not murder me...

HAMLET

A bloody deed! almost as bad, good mother,
As kill a king, and marry with his brother.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

As kill a king!

HAMLET

Ay, lady, 'twas my word...

QUEEN GERTRUDE

What have I done, that thou dar'st wag thy tongue
In noise so rude against me?

HAMLET

Such an act

That blurs the grace and blush of modesty,
Calls virtue hypocrite, takes off the rose
From the fair forehead of an innocent love
And sets a blister there, makes marriage-vows
As false as dicers' oaths: O, such a deed
As from the body of contraction plucks
The very soul, and sweet religion makes
A rhapsody of words: heaven's face doth glow:
Yea, this solidity and compound mass,
With tristful visage, as against the doom,
Is thought-sick at the act.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Ay me, what act,
That roars so loud, and thunders in the index?

HAMLET

Look here, upon this picture, and on this,
The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.
See, what a grace was seated on this brow;
Hyperion's curls; the front of Jove himself;
An eye like Mars, to threaten and command;
A station like the herald Mercury
New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill;
A combination and a form indeed,
Where every god did seem to set his seal,
To give the world assurance of a man:
This was your husband. Look you now, what follows:
Here is your husband; like a mildew'd ear,
Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes?
Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed,
And batten on this moor? Ha! have you eyes?
You cannot call it love; for at your age
The hey-day in the blood is tame, it's humble,
And waits upon the judgment: and what judgment
Would step from this to this? Sense, sure, you have,
Else could you not have motion; but sure, that sense
Is apoplex'd; for madness would not err,
Nor sense to ecstasy was ne'er so thrall'd
But it reserved some quantity of choice,
To serve in such a difference. What devil was't
That thus hath cozen'd you at hoodman-blind?

Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight,
Ears without hands or eyes, smelling sans all,
Or but a sickly part of one true sense
Could not so mope.

O shame! where is thy blush? Rebellious hell,
If thou canst mutine in a matron's bones,
To flaming youth let virtue be as wax,
And melt in her own fire: proclaim no shame
When the compulsive ardour gives the charge,
Since frost itself as actively doth burn
And reason panders will.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

O Hamlet, speak no more:
Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul;
And there I see such black and grained spots
As will not leave their tinct.

HAMLET

Nay, but to live
In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed,
Stew'd in corruption, honeying and making love
Over the nasty sty.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

O, speak to me no more;
These words, like daggers, enter in mine ears;
No more, sweet Hamlet!

HAMLET

A murderer and a villain;
A slave that is not twentieth part the tithes
Of your precedent lord; a vice of kings;
A cutpurse of the empire and the rule,
That from a shelf the precious diadem stole,
And put it in his pocket!

QUEEN GERTRUDE

No more...

HAMLET

My pulse, as yours, doth temperately keep time,
And makes as healthful music: it is not madness
That I have utter'd: bring me to the test,
And I the matter will re-word; which madness
Would gambol from. Mother, for love of grace,
Lay not that mattering unction to your soul,
That not your trespass, but my madness speaks:
It will but skin and film the ulcerous place,
Whilst rank corruption, mining all within,
Infects unseen. Confess yourself to heaven;
Repent what's past; avoid what is to come;
And do not spread the compost on the weeds,
To make them ranker. Forgive me this my virtue;

For in the fatness of these pury times
Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg,
Yea, curb and woo for leave to do him good.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain.

HAMLET

O, throw away the worser part of it,
And live the purer with the other half.
Good night: but go not to mine uncle's bed;
Assume a virtue, if you have it not.
That monster, custom, who all sense doth eat,
Of habits devil, is angel yet in this,
That to the use of actions fair and good
He likewise gives a frock or livery,
That aptly is put on. Refrain to-night,
And that shall lend a kind of easiness
To the next abstinence: the next more easy;
For use almost can change the stamp of nature,
And either [] the devil, or throw him out
With wondrous potency. Once more, good night:
And when you are desirous to be bless'd,
I'll blessing beg of you... So, again, good night.
I must be cruel, only to be kind:
Thus bad begins and worse remains behind.
One word more, good lady.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

What shall I do?

HAMLET

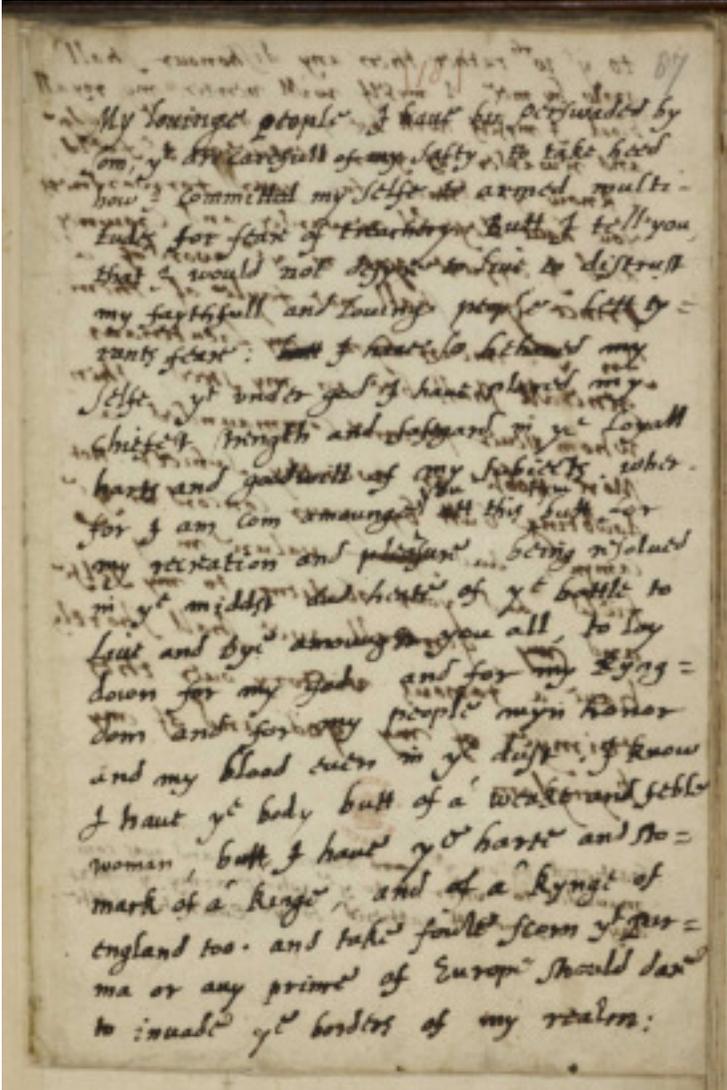
Not this, by no means, that I bid you do:
Let the bloat king tempt you again to bed;
Pinch wanton on your cheek; call you his mouse;
And let him, for a pair of reechy kisses,
Or paddling in your neck with his damn'd fingers,
Make you to ravel all this matter out,
That I essentially am not in madness,
But mad in craft. 'Twere good you let him know;
For who, that's but a queen, fair, sober, wise,
Would from a paddock, from a bat, a gib,
Such dear concernings hide? who would do so?
No, in despite of sense and secrecy,
Unpeg the basket on the house's top.
Let the birds fly, and, like the famous ape,
To try conclusions, in the basket creep,
And break your own neck down.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Be thou assured, if words be made of breath,
And breath of life, I have no life to breathe
What thou hast said to me.

Queen Elizabeth I's Tilbury Speech

In 1588, Queen Elizabeth I of England delivered a speech to troops stationed at Tilbury during the Anglo-Spanish War. Both the primary source document and a transcript of the speech in present day English are presented below. Elizabeth's reign was controversial in that she was female, unmarried, and childless. Many doubted her ability to rule, because of her gender, but also feared the consequences of her marrying: since the reigning royal family would likely lose power. When Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet* in 1600, Queen Elizabeth I was nearing the end of her reign and England was facing an uncertain future.



My loving people,

We have been persuaded by some that are careful of our safety, to take heed how we commit ourselves to armed multitudes, for fear of treachery; but I assure you I do not desire to live to distrust my faithful and loving people. Let tyrants fear. I have always so behaved myself that, under God, I have placed my chiefest strength and safeguard in the loyal hearts and good-will of my subjects; and therefore I am come amongst you, as you see, at this time, not for my recreation and disport, but being resolved, in the midst and heat of the battle, to live and die amongst you all; to lay down for my God, and for my kingdom, and my people, my honor and my blood, even in the dust.

I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too, and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any prince of Europe, should dare to invade the borders of my realm: to which rather than any dishonor shall grow by me, I myself will take up arms, I myself will be your general, judge, and rewarder of every one of your virtues in the field.

I know already, for your forwardness you have deserved rewards and crowns; and We do assure you in the word of a prince, they shall be duly paid you. In the meantime, my lieutenant general shall be in my stead, than whom never prince commanded a more noble or worthy subject; not doubting but by your obedience to my general, by your concord in the camp, and your valour in the field, we shall shortly have a famous victory over those enemies of my God, of my kingdom, and of my people.

Source: The British Library. Elizabeth I's Tilbury speech.

5) What is the main idea of the passage?

6) What do you think the following sentence means? Why do you think Queen Elizabeth I chose to include this in her speech?

“I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too...”

7) Do you think Queen Gertrude from *Hamlet* and Queen Elizabeth I are similar or different? In what ways? Use two pieces of evidence from either passage to support your argument.

8) Share your argument with a neighbor. Are your arguments similar or different? What are some of the strengths and weaknesses of your arguments? Based on your conversation, revise your argument to make it even better.

Rediscovering a King

For more than 500 years, the whereabouts of the remains of England's King Richard III were unknown. Though only king for two years, Richard III was immortalized in Shakespeare's eponymous play as a murderous, hunchbacked tyrant (more recent historians, however, have suggested his reputation may have been tarnished by opposition propaganda). Richard was killed in battle by Henry Tudor in 1485. This meant the end of his royal house, the House of York, and the beginning of the house of Tudor, which continued until Queen Elizabeth I died without an heir in 1603. Historical accounts of what happened to Richard's remains differ, with some saying that his body was thrown into the River Soar, and others saying it was buried in an unmarked grave beneath the Greyfriars Priory in nearby Leicester.

In 2012, a research team from the University of Leicester, led by archaeologist Richard Buckley, began excavations in search of the lost king. Citing historical records and old maps, the team believed the ruins of Greyfriars Priory lay beneath a local parking lot. Within days, the team had uncovered a skeleton.

Examination of the bones suggested the skeleton could be the remains of Richard III, since the deceased was the right age and gender, bore evidence of battle wounds, and featured a severely twisted spine. The curved spine—a characteristic of scoliosis—would have caused one of the man's shoulders to be higher than the other and, perhaps, caused the man to have a hunchbacked posture.

To confirm the provenance of the skeleton, Buckley and his team used radiocarbon dating on two ribs, which dated the skeleton to between 1455 and 1540. Next, the researchers turned to geneticists to test the skeleton's DNA against that of a relative of Richard III.

Michael Ibsen, a fifty-five-year old Canadian-born furniture maker, was identified through genealogical records as seventeenth-generation descendant of Richard's sister, Anne of York. The direct maternal line from Anne to Ibsen's mother indicated that Ibsen and Richard would carry the same distinctive mitochondrial DNA, which is passed directly from mother to child through the ovum. DNA tests confirmed that Ibsen carried the same mtDNA sequence as the skeleton. A statistical test known as Bayesian analysis determined that—given all the evidence—there was a 99.99% probability that the skeleton was, in fact, King Richard III.

In 2014, the city of Leicester opened a Richard III visitor center dedicated to the life, death, and incredible rediscovery of the fifteenth-century king. There, visitors can view a 3D interactive representation of the grave site and a 3D replica of the entire skeleton. However, the actual remains are not on display; in 2015, the last Plantagenet king of England was laid to rest with a proper funeral at what his historical successor, Queen Elizabeth II, called “an event of great national and international significance.”

- 9) What do you think the word provenance means in this context? If you didn't know this word, how might you use context clues from the passage to understand its meaning?
- 10) What happened to Richard III's remains after he was killed?
- 11) In a few sentences, explain the process through which scientists identified the remains of King Richard III. Use two pieces of evidence from the text to support your explanation.
- 12) Share your explanation with a neighbor. Are your explanations similar or different? What are some of the strengths and weaknesses of your explanations? Based on your conversation, revise your explanation to make it even better.

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Be thou assured, if words be made of breath,
And breath of life, I have no life to breathe
What thou hast said to me.

- 1) In one sentence, summarize what is happening in the passage.

In this passage, one character (Hamlet) confronts his mother (Queen Gertrude) about his father's death and his mother's relationship with his father's brother.

- 2) According to the passage, of what is Hamlet accusing his mother?

Hamlet is accusing his mother of killing Hamlet's father in order to be with his brother, Caludius.

- 3) What do you think the phrase "compulsive ardour" means? If you didn't know this phrase, how could you use context clues from the passage to understand its meaning?

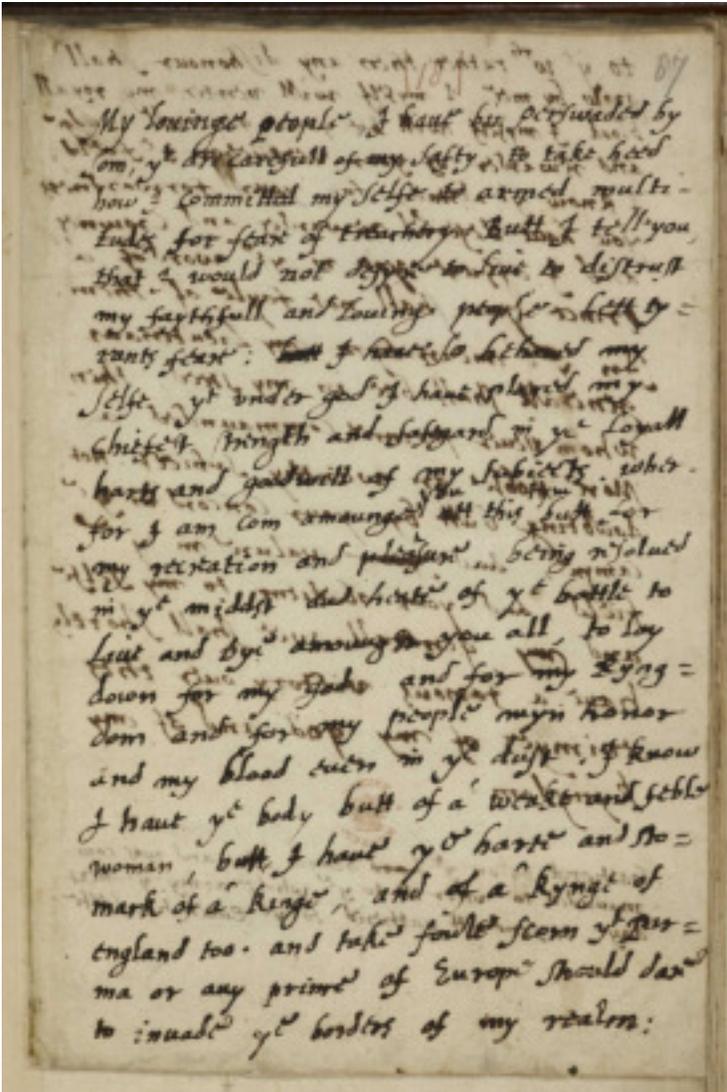
I think "compulsive ardour" refers to Queen Gertrude's desire to be with her first husband's brother. In the context in which it is used, Hamlet is questioning how his mother could have made this choice. He concludes that natural desire, rather than reason, is the only explanation for her choice.

- 4) What purpose do Queen Gertrude's final words in this scene serve? "Be thou assured, if words be made of breath, and breath of life, I have no life to breathe what thou hast said to me."

Queen Gertrude's final words serve to show that she has been strongly affected by Hamlet's confrontation.

Queen Elizabeth I's Tilbury Speech

In 1588, Queen Elizabeth I of England delivered a speech to troops stationed at Tilbury during the Anglo-Spanish War. Both the primary source document and a transcript of the speech in present day English are presented below. Elizabeth's reign was controversial in that she was female, unmarried, and childless. Many doubted her ability to rule, because of her gender, but also feared the consequences of her marrying: since the reigning royal family would likely lose power. When Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet* in 1600, Queen Elizabeth I was nearing the end of her reign and England was facing an uncertain future.



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I know already, for your forwardness you have deserved rewards and crowns; and We do assure you in the word of a prince, they shall be duly paid you. In the meantime, my lieutenant general shall be in my stead, than whom never prince commanded a more noble or worthy subject; not doubting but by your obedience to my general, by your concord in the camp, and your valour in the field, we shall shortly have a famous victory over those enemies of my God, of my kingdom, and of my people.

Source: The British Library. Elizabeth I's Tilbury speech.

5) What is the main idea of the passage?

The main idea of the passage is that Queen Elizabeth I is committed to the people of England and capable of helping defend them in battle.

6) What do you think the following sentence means? Why do you think Queen Elizabeth I chose to include this in her speech?

“I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too...”

I think Queen Elizabeth I included this sentence to convince her subjects that she is a capable leader. The passage’s introduction states that her reign was controversial because she was “female, unmarried, and childless.” By comparing herself to a king, Queen Elizabeth I may inspire some confidence among the people of England, especially in the face of potential invaders.

7) Do you think Queen Gertrude from *Hamlet* and Queen Elizabeth I are similar or different? In what ways? Use two pieces of evidence from either passage to support your argument.

I think Queen Gertrude and Queen Elizabeth I are different. Queen Elizabeth I rules England on her own. She does not have a king, and she does not have children. Queen Gertrude, on the other hand, remarries soon after her husband, the King of Denmark, dies, and she has one child. Queen Elizabeth I also appears to be more strong-willed than Queen Gertrude. Queen Gertrude backs down when Hamlet confronts her, while Queen Elizabeth I gives an empowering speech to her troops.

8) Share your argument with a neighbor. Are your arguments similar or different? What are some of the strengths and weaknesses of your arguments? Based on your conversation, revise your argument to make it even better.

I could improve my argument by using quotations from the text to support my points:

I think Queen Gertrude and Queen Elizabeth I are different. Queen Elizabeth I rules England on her own. She does not have a king, and she does not have children. Queen Gertrude, on the other hand, remarries soon after her husband, the King of Denmark, dies, and she has one child. Queen Elizabeth I also appears to be more strong-willed than Queen Gertrude. Queen Gertrude backs down when Hamlet confronts her (“What shall I do?”), while Queen Elizabeth I gives an empowering speech to her troops (“I myself will be your general, judge, and rewarder of every one of your virtues in the field.”).

Rediscovering a King

For more than 500 years, the whereabouts of the remains of England's King Richard III were unknown. Though only king for two years, Richard III was immortalized in Shakespeare's eponymous play as a murderous, hunchbacked tyrant (more recent historians, however, have suggested his reputation may have been tarnished by opposition propaganda). Richard was killed in battle by Henry Tudor in 1485. This meant the end of his royal house, the House of York, and the beginning of the house of Tudor, which continued until Queen Elizabeth I died without an heir in 1603. Historical accounts of what happened to Richard's remains differ, with some saying that his body was thrown into the River Soar, and others saying it was buried in an unmarked grave beneath the Greyfriars Priory in nearby Leicester.

In 2012, a research team from the University of Leicester, led by archaeologist Richard Buckley, began excavations in search of the lost king. Citing historical records and old maps, the team believed the ruins of Greyfriars Priory lay beneath a local parking lot. Within days, the team had uncovered a skeleton.

Examination of the bones suggested the skeleton could be the remains of Richard III, since the deceased was the right age and gender, bore evidence of battle wounds, and featured a severely twisted spine. The curved spine—a characteristic of scoliosis—would have caused one of the man's shoulders to be higher than the other and, perhaps, caused the man to have a hunchbacked posture.

To confirm the provenance of the skeleton, Buckley and his team used radiocarbon dating on two ribs, which dated the skeleton to between 1455 and 1540. Next, the researchers turned to geneticists to test the skeleton's DNA against that of a relative of Richard III.

Michael Ibsen, a fifty-five-year old Canadian-born furniture maker, was identified through genealogical records as seventeenth-generation descendant of Richard's sister, Anne of York. The direct maternal line from Anne to Ibsen's mother indicated that Ibsen and Richard would carry the same distinctive mitochondrial DNA, which is passed directly from mother to child through the ovum. DNA tests confirmed that Ibsen carried the same mtDNA sequence as the skeleton. A statistical test known as Bayesian analysis determined that—given all the evidence—there was a 99.99% probability that the skeleton was, in fact, King Richard III.

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- 9) What do you think the word “provenance” means in this context? If you didn’t know this word, how might you use context clues from the passage to understand its meaning?

I think “provenance” means origin or background. The paragraph discusses how scientists use radio carbon dating and DNA to determine the “provenance” of the remains in order to prove whether or not they belong to Richard III. The scientists need to know the origin or background of the skeleton in order to prove this.

- 10) What happened to Richard III’s remains after he was killed?

According to the passage, Richard III’s remains were “buried in an unmarked grave beneath the Greyfriars Priory in nearby Leicester.”

- 11) In a few sentences, explain the process through which scientists identified the remains of King Richard III. Use two pieces of evidence from the text to support your explanation.

Scientists used radiocarbon dating and genetics to identify the remains of King Richard III. By using radiocarbon dating, scientists dated the remains to between 1455 and 1540. Then, by comparing the skeleton’s DNA to that of a known descendant of Richard III’s family, scientists found the two shared an important matching DNA sequence.

- 12) Share your explanation with a neighbor. Are your explanations similar or different? What are some of the strengths and weaknesses of your explanations? Based on your conversation, revise your explanation to make it even better.

Hamlet – Lesson Planning Information and Standards Mapping

This close reading and writing task includes an excerpt from *Hamlet* and two additional passages designed to connect with and build upon the themes present in the book. These materials were developed to engage students in the level of rigor and types of skills and practices they will encounter on the Evidence-Based Reading and Writing (EBRW) section of the SAT. Like the EBRW section of the SAT, this activity involves close reading of complex literary, historical, and scientific passages. Based on the rigor of the passages, these materials are targeted towards an 11th grade level.

The questions that follow each passage are aligned with relevant standards from Common Core State Standards (CCSS), ACT College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS), and SAT Domains and Dimensions. Each of these questions is mapped to one or more relevant standards below to illustrate the relevant types of thinking and reasoning targeted by each question.

Question 1:

- The student will identify a reasonable summary of a text or of key information and ideas in text. (SAT IISM.01: Summarizing)
- Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2)
- Summarize key supporting ideas and details in more challenging passages. (CCRS IDT 503)

Question 2:

- The student will draw reasonable inferences and logical conclusions from text. (SAT IIRC.02: Determining implicit meanings)
- Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1)
- Draw logical conclusions in more challenging passages. (CCRS CLR 504)

Questions 3 & 9:

- The student will determine the meaning of words and phrases in context. (SAT IIWD.01: Interpreting words and phrases in context)
- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.4)
- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines faction in Federalist No. 10). (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.4)
- Interpret words and phrases in a passage that makes consistent use of figurative, general academic, domain-specific, or otherwise difficult language (CCRS WME 603)

Question 4:

- The student will analyze the relationship between a particular part of a text (e.g. a sentence) and the whole text. (SAT RTS.02: Analyzing part-whole relationships)
- Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed) (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3)

- Analyze how the choice of a specific word or phrase shapes meaning or tone in more challenging passages (CCRS WME 502)

Question 5:

- The student will identify explicitly stated central ideas or themes in text and determine implicit central ideas or themes from text (SAT IICI.01: Determining central ideas & themes)
- Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.2)
- Infer a central idea or theme in more challenging passages or their paragraphs (CCRS IDT 601)

Question 6:

- The student will determine the main or most likely purpose of a text or of a particular part of a text (SAT RPU.01: Analyzing purpose)
- Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness or beauty of the text (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.6)
- Infer a purpose in more challenging passages and how that purpose shapes content and style (CCRS PPV 601)

Questions 7 & 8:

- The student will synthesize information and ideas from paired texts. (SAT SMT.01: Analyzing multiple texts).
- Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.9)
- Make straightforward comparisons between two passages. (CCRS SYN 301)
- The student will cite the textual evidence that best supports a given claim or point. (SAT IITE.01: Citing textual evidence)
- Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.1)
- Analyze how one or more sentences in more challenging passages offer reasons for or support a claim (CCRS ARG 501)

Question 10:

- The student will identify information and ideas explicitly stated in text (SAT IIRC.01: Determining explicit meanings)
- Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.1)
- Locate important details in more challenging passages. (CCRS CLR 502)

Questions 11 & 12:

- The student will identify explicitly stated relationships or determine implicit relationships between and among individuals, events, or ideas (e.g., cause-effect, comparison-contrast, sequence) (SAT IIUR.01: Understanding Relationships)
- Determine the central ideas or conclusions of a text; summarize complex concepts, processes, or information presented in a text by paraphrasing them in simpler but still accurate terms (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.11-12.2)
- Order sequences of events in more challenging passages. (CCRS REL 601)

- The student will cite the textual evidence that best supports a given claim or point. (SAT II TE.01: Citing textual evidence)
- Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.1)
- Analyze how one or more sentences in more challenging passages offer reasons for or support a claim (CCRS ARG 501)