



Welcome to the HRM Secondary Academy English Department! This placement test is designed to help you find the best fit for your student in our English program. If you would like help evaluating any part of this test, please reach out to us at: [HRM English Department](#).

Read the following passage and then answer the questions.

The Burden of Invention

Elijah Harland had spent the better part of a decade refining his revolutionary design—a machine that could harness wind energy with unparalleled efficiency. However, his aspirations were met with relentless skepticism. Investors scoffed at his ambitious claims, dismissing them as impractical dreams. His peers, engineers bound by convention, reduced his meticulous calculations to theoretical abstractions with no real-world application.

Undeterred, Elijah funneled his dwindling resources into a prototype. Each night, the dim glow of oil lamps illuminated his modest workshop as he toiled over gears, blades, and intricate mechanisms. His hands, once unblemished, grew calloused and blistered from endless adjustments, each one fine-tuning the delicate balance between failure and success. It was not merely invention that drove him but the belief that progress was an obligation—a duty owed to the generations yet to come.

The morning of the unveiling arrived with a biting wind, as if nature itself wished to test his ingenuity. A crowd gathered—some drawn by curiosity, others expecting spectacle, a few hoping to see him fail. Elijah steadied his breath, ignoring the whispers of doubt that wove through the assembly. With a decisive motion, he activated the machine.

At first, nothing happened. The silence pressed against him, threatening to confirm every skeptic's judgment. Then, slowly, the great blades began to turn. The whirling arms captured the invisible force of the wind, converting it into energy. Gasps rippled through the onlookers, their skepticism shifting into awe.

But triumph was fleeting. A harsh, grinding sound split the air as the machine faltered. The blades wobbled, then locked into place with a jarring halt. Murmurs of disappointment spread like a creeping tide. Elijah felt the weight of humiliation bear down upon him.

Yet, even in failure, his resolve did not waver. He crouched beside the machine, examining the faulty mechanism. His heart pounded—not with despair, but with renewed determination. He knew, without question, that this was not the end. Failure was not a conclusion; it was a beginning.

On the line, print in **CAPITAL LETTERS** the best answer for each question.

Comprehension

- _____ 1. What is Elijah's primary motivation for creating his invention?
A. a challenge from his peers B. desire for public recognition
C. sense of duty toward future generations D. financial gain
- _____ 2. How do others initially react to Elijah's ideas? They are
A. enthusiastic and supportive B. indifferent
C. skeptical and dismissive D. intimidated by his intellect
- _____ 3. The phrase "**toiled in his modest workshop**" suggests that Elijah is...
A. careless and impatient B. industrious and determined
C. wealthy and influential D. reckless with his resources
- _____ 4. The significance of the wind on the morning of the unveiling is that it...
A. symbolizes the resistance he faced
B. foreshadows his success
C. represents his growing doubts
D. has no symbolic meaning
- _____ 5. What is the immediate reaction of the crowd when the machine starts working?
A. outrage B. indifference C. fear D. amazement
- _____ 6. Elijah's reaction to the machine's failure reveals that he...
A. is easily discouraged
B. sees failure as a steppingstone to success
C. decides to abandon his project
D. blames others for his failure
- _____ 7. Which theme is best supported by the passage?
A. Perseverance in the face of failure can lead to eventual success.
B. Ambition often results in unintended consequences.
C. Public opinion determines the worth of an idea
D. Innovation is only valuable if it yields immediate results.
- _____ 8. The passage suggests that progress is...
A. an inevitable force that requires no effort
B. something that occurs only with financial backing
C. a responsibility that must be actively pursued
D. a process that leads to immediate success
- _____ 9. Which statement best describes the structure of the passage? A character...
A. reflects on a past success
B. realizes he was mistaken in his ambitions
C. struggles against nature's forces
D. faces a challenge, experiences failure, and renews his determination
- _____ 10. The passage ends with Elijah feeling **reignited determination** to show he...
A. wants to prove his doubters wrong
B. realizes that true innovation requires persistence
C. is angered by the crowd's response
D. sees a financial opportunity despite the setback

Vocabulary

- _____ 11. What does **relentless** most likely mean in this sentence: “His aspirations were met with relentless skepticism”?
- A. harsh and unyielding B. mild and occasional
C. encouraging and hopeful D. brief and forgettable
- _____ 12. What is the meaning of **modest** in the phrase “toiled in his modest workshop”?
- A. large and extravagant B. simple and unassuming
C. poorly constructed D. highly advanced
- _____ 13. What does **precursor** mean in this sentence: “Failure, he knew, was merely a precursor to success”?
- A. a direct cause B. an obstacle
C. a signal or forerunner D. an unrelated event
- _____ 14. What does **ingenuity** most likely mean in this clause: “...as if nature itself wished to test his ingenuity”?
- A. carelessness B. originality and creativity
C. hesitation D. foolishness
- _____ 15. What is the meaning of **triumph** in this phrase: “But Elijah’s triumph was short-lived”?
- A. a minor event B. an ongoing failure
C. a lucky guess D. a temporary success

Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics

- _____ 16. Choose the sentence that correctly uses parallel structure.
- A. She likes hiking, biking, and to swim.
B. She likes to hike, bike, and swimming.
C. She likes to hike, biking, and swimming.
D. She likes hiking, biking, and swimming.
- _____ 17. Identify the sentence with proper subject-verb agreement.
- A. The collection of paintings were on display.
B. A huge box of cookies were on the table.
C. Everyone in the class enjoys his lectures.
D. The group of scientists are preparing their findings.
- _____ 18. Choose the correct use of **affect/effect**.
- A. His speech had a profound effect on the audience.
B. The weather will effect my travel plans.
C. The new policy had a positive affect on the company.
D. The medicine did not affect to her symptoms.
- _____ 19. Which sentence is correctly punctuated?
- A. The novel was fascinating, however; the ending was disappointing.
B. The meeting is scheduled for Monday; therefore, I cannot attend.
C. She asked “Are you coming to the party”?
D. I love classical music; especially Beethoven.
- _____ 20. Choose the sentence with correct apostrophe use.
- A. Its’ a beautiful day outside.
B. The dog wagged it’s tail excitedly.

- C. The scientist's are presenting their research.
- D. The students' project won first place.

Writing: What do you prefer? Consider these topics:

- life in a city or life in the countryside
- homeschooling or public school
- individual sports or group sports
- college or trade school

Choose **ONE** of the topics. Write an 8-12 sentence paragraph comparing/contrasting your choice. Be sure to give specific examples/details to prove your answer.

Answer Key

1. C	8. C	15. D
2. C	9. D	16. D
3. B	10. B	17. C
4. A	11. A	18. A
5. D	12. B	19. B
6. B	13. C	20. D
7. A	14. B	

Paragraph Rubric: Choose the score (1-5) that best describes your students' writing 5 points: The paragraph

- Begins with a topic sentence that addresses the prompt
- Follows a logical order throughout
- Provides specific descriptive/explanatory details
- Provides enough information to create prove the topic sentence
- Has few distracting usage/mechanical errors

4 points: The paragraph

- Begins with a topic sentence that may not directly address the prompt
- Follows a logical order for most of the paragraph
- Provides some specific descriptive/explanatory details
- Provides some information, but the development is somewhat unclear or incomplete
- Has one or two distracting usage/mechanical errors

3 points: The paragraph

- Begins with a topic sentence but does not address the prompt fully
- Follows a logical order for some of the paragraph
- Provides one or two specific descriptive/explanatory details
- Provides information, but the development is unclear or incomplete
- Has three or four distracting usage/mechanical errors

2 points: The paragraph

- Has a weak topic sentence
- The structure is somewhat confusing
- Provides mostly vague descriptive/explanatory details
- Provides little information to develop the topic
- Has numerous distracting usage/mechanical errors

1 point: The paragraph

- Has no topic sentence
- Has no sense of logical structure
- Descriptive/explanatory details are lacking, unclear, or confusing
- Does not provide enough information to complete the task
- Has numerous distracting usage/mechanical errors

Recommended for English 3-4 class: 18+/25 points