

The Decay of Living (1899)
By Oscar Wilde (Ireland)

Directions: This part consists of selections from prose works and questions on their content form and style. After reading each passage, choose the best answer to each question.

Note: Pay particular attention to the requirement of questions that contain the words NOT, LEAST, or EXCEPT.

Questions 1-13 concern “The Decay of Living” by Oscar Wilde

1. Which of the following is the primary meaning of the word “nature” as it is used in the passage?
 - (A) Kind, sort, or type
 - (B) The physical landscape
 - (C) The force controlling a person’s character
 - (D) A pristine state of existence
 - (E) The essential character of a thing
2. Vivian’s first words (“Enjoy nature! I am glad to say that I have entirely lost that faculty”) are surprising because Vivian
 - (A) prevents Cyril from finishing his thought
 - (B) claims to enjoy having lost a capacity to enjoy
 - (C) thinks he has lost something that he obviously still possesses
 - (D) implies that enjoying nature and smoking are not incongruous
 - (E) is not responding to Cyril’s remark
3. From the context, the reader can infer that “Morris’ poorest workman” (line 31) is
 - (A) a gardener
 - (B) a tailor
 - (C) a furniture craftsman
 - (D) an impoverished artist
 - (E) an agricultural laborer
4. Vivian probably calls the quotation in lines 33-34 “vilely phrased” (line 35) because he
 - (A) considers himself a poor judge of style
 - (B) knows that the street did not borrow its name from Oxford University
 - (C) believes that the furniture sold in Oxford Street stores is too shabby for his taste
 - (D) considers it a pretentious and roundabout way of saying something
 - (E) sees in it contradictions of his ideas about art and nature
5. Vivian’s view of nature might best be described as
 - (A) scientific
 - (B) antiromantic
 - (C) animistic
 - (D) quasi-religious
 - (E) circumspect
6. In lines 49-54 (“Thinking...stupidity”), the speaker makes use of all the following EXCEPT
 - (A) hyperbole
 - (B) irony
 - (C) insult
 - (D) pathos
 - (E) analogy

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7. The primary rhetorical function of the sentence “Fortunately, in England, at any rate, thought is not catching” (lines 51-53) is to
- (A) introduce a digression from the central topic
 - (B) introduce an exception to a general rule
 - (C) provide supporting evidence for a previously stated thesis
 - (D) undermine a point previously made
 - (E) distinguish between two categories
8. In line 55, the “great historic bulwark of our happiness” refers to English
- (A) art
 - (B) strength
 - (C) stupidity
 - (D) education
 - (E) dislike of nature
9. The second of Vivian’s two speeches repeats the argument of the first that
- (A) nature is uncomfortable
 - (B) nature is the primary source of human unhappiness
 - (C) art has much to learn from nature
 - (D) nature is anti-intellectual
 - (E) the failures of nature inspire people to create
10. Which of the following does Vivian explicitly endorse?
- (A) Egotism
 - (B) Thoughtfulness
 - (C) Education
 - (D) Smoking
 - (E) Poetry
11. From the passage, we can infer that the art Vivian would most value would be characterized by all of the following EXCEPT
- (A) inventiveness
 - (B) intellectual rigor
 - (C) careful design
 - (D) cultivated taste
 - (E) moral purpose
12. In the passage, Vivian ridicules all of the following commonly accepted ideas about nature EXCEPT:
- (A) Nature is enjoyable.
 - (B) Nature is indifferent to human life.
 - (C) The study of art increases our appreciation of nature.
 - (D) Nature has variety and design.
 - (E) Art reflects the beauty of nature.
13. The comedy of the passage derives chiefly from
- (A) the triviality of the subject discussed
 - (B) the superficiality of Vivian’s analysis
 - (C) paradoxical inversions of conventional viewpoints
 - (D) the use of sarcasm
 - (E) witty repartee between the two speakers

END OF SECTION I.

**IF FINISHED BEFORE TIME IS CALLED, YOU MAY
CHECK YOUR WORK ON THIS SECTION.**