

CLEP® Humanities: At a Glance

Description of the Examination

The Humanities examination tests general knowledge of literature, art and music and the other performing arts. It is broad in its coverage, with questions on all periods and in many different fields: poetry, prose, philosophy, art, architecture, music, dance, theater and film. The examination requires candidates to demonstrate their understanding of the humanities through recollection of specific information, comprehension and application of concepts, and analysis and interpretation of various works of art.

The exam contains approximately 140 questions to be answered in 90 minutes. Some of these are pretest questions that will not be scored.

Knowledge and Skills Required

Questions on the Humanities exam test the abilities listed below, in the approximate percentages indicated. Some questions may require more than one of the abilities.

- Knowledge of factual information (authors, works, etc.) (50 percent of the examination)
- Recognition of techniques such as rhyme scheme, medium, and matters of style, and the ability to identify them as characteristics of certain writers, artists, schools or periods (30 percent of the examination)
- Understanding and interpretation of literary passages and art reproductions that are likely to be unfamiliar to most candidates (20 percent of the examination)

The subject matter of the Humanities examination is drawn from the following topics. The percentages next to the topics indicate the approximate percentages of exam questions on those topics.

50% Literature

- 10% Drama
- 10–15% Poetry
- 15–20% Fiction
- 10% Nonfiction (including philosophy)

50% The Arts

- 20% Visual arts: painting, sculpture, etc.
- 5% Visual arts: architecture
- 15% Performing arts: music
- 10% Performing arts: film, dance, etc.

The exam questions, drawn from the entire history of art and culture, are divided among the following periods: Classical,

Medieval, Renaissance, and 17th, 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. At least 5–10 percent of the questions draw on non-Western cultures. Some questions cross disciplines and/or chronological periods, and a substantial number test knowledge of terminology, genre and style.

Study Resources

To do well on the Humanities exam, you should know something about each of the forms of literature and fine arts from the various periods and cultures listed above. No single book is likely to cover all these areas, so it will be necessary to refer to college textbooks, supplementary reading and references for introductory courses in literature and fine arts at the college level. A recent survey conducted by CLEP® found that the following textbooks are among those used by college faculty who teach the equivalent course. You might find one or more of these online or at your local college bookstore. HINT: Look at the table of contents first to make sure it matches the Knowledge and Skills Required for the CLEP exam.

Adams, <i>Exploring the Humanities</i> (Prentice Hall)
Benton and DiYanni, <i>Arts and Culture: Introduction to the Humanities</i> (Prentice Hall)
Bishop, <i>Adventures in the Human Spirit</i> (Prentice Hall)
Cunningham, <i>Culture and Values: A Survey of the Humanities</i> (Wadsworth)
Fiero, <i>The Humanistic Tradition</i> (McGraw-Hill)
Martin, <i>Humanities Through the Arts</i> (McGraw-Hill)
Sayre, <i>The Humanities: Culture, Continuity, and Change</i> , Vols. I and II (Prentice Hall)
Witt et al., <i>The Humanities</i> (Houghton-Mifflin)

In addition to reading, a lively interest in the arts — going to museums and concerts, attending plays, seeing motion pictures, watching public television programs such as *Great Performances* and *Masterpiece Theatre*, and listening to radio stations that play classical music and feature discussions of the arts — constitutes excellent preparation.

Visit www.collegeboard.org/clepprep for additional humanities resources. You can also find suggestions for exam preparation in Chapter IV of the *CLEP Official Study Guide*. In addition, many college faculty post their course materials on their schools' websites.

Sample Questions

The following sample questions do not appear on an actual CLEP examination. They are intended to give potential test-takers an indication of the format and difficulty level of the examination and to provide content for practice and review. For more sample questions and info about the test, see the *CLEP Official Study Guide*.

1. The lute is most similar to the modern

- (A) guitar
- (B) piano
- (C) violin
- (D) accordion
- (E) flute



2. The vessel in the above photograph reflects the style of which of the following civilizations?

- (A) Early Dynastic Egypt
- (B) Pre-Columbian Incan
- (C) Ming Dynasty China
- (D) Hellenistic Greece
- (E) Medieval Scandinavia

3. Which of the following is a nineteenth-century artist who was influenced by Japanese prints and is known as both a painter and a printmaker?

- (A) Salvador Dalí
- (B) Thomas Gainsborough
- (C) Henri Matisse
- (D) Mary Cassatt
- (E) Georgia O'Keeffe

4. The development of photography in the 19th century had which of the following effects on the arts?

- (A) It led to the death of painting, since subjects could be rendered more accurately in a photograph.
- (B) Photographers were immediately accepted as artists, and their works displayed in major museums.
- (C) Technology became an important component of every major art form, from music to poetry to theater.
- (D) It gave rise to the realist movement, which emphasized a kind of photographic objectivity in the depiction of its subjects.
- (E) It led to the late 19th century practice of including photographic portraits of painters along with their works at galleries.

5. *Mrs. Dalloway*, *A Room of One's Own*, and *To The Lighthouse* are all works written by

- (A) Ernest Hemingway
- (B) Jane Austen
- (C) Virginia Woolf
- (D) Zora Neale Hurston
- (E) Mary Wollstonecraft

6. The rediscovery of classical texts and ideas, an emphasis on reason, and the development of linear perspective in art were characteristic of which of the following movements in Europe?

- (A) the Inquisition
- (B) the Renaissance
- (C) Romanticism
- (D) Impressionism
- (E) Cubism

Credit Recommendations

The American Council on Education has recommended that colleges grant 6 credits for a score of 50, which is equivalent to a course grade of C, on the CLEP Humanities exam. Each college, however, is responsible for setting its own policy. For candidates with satisfactory scores on the Humanities examination, colleges may grant credit toward fulfillment of a distribution requirement, or for a particular course that matches the exam in content. Check with your school to find out the score it requires for granting credit, the number of credit hours granted and the course that can be bypassed with a passing score.

Answers to Sample Questions: 1-A; 2-B; 3-C; 4-D; 5-C; 6-B.