



The GED Language Arts, Reading Test

Drama



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GED

Video Partner



#15

Passing the GED Reading Test

Talk low, talk slow, and don't talk too much.
John Wayne (1907-1979) Advice on acting

Video 15 Focus: how to read and interpret a play

You Will Learn From Video 15:

- How to recognize the parts of a script.
- How to interpret the dialogue the playwright has written.
- How to analyze a play using story elements.



Words You Need to Know:

While viewing the video, circle *T* for *True* and *F* for *False* in the following sentences. Answers are on page 14.

1. T or F When writing a play, playwrights write in **script format**.
2. T or F **Stage directions** are usually shown in parentheses or brackets.
3. T or F An **external conflict** in a character is sometimes shown by a change of heart within.
4. T or F The **set** is what the stage looks like.
5. T or F A **passage** from a play is the entire play with nothing left out.

Points to Remember:

- Look for scripts online or in the library.
- Practice reading in dialogue form. Try reading out loud with another person.
- Develop your imagination to visualize what the playwright means.
- Attend a local play to experience drama first hand.

Drama is a form of literature, even though you don't read words from a book. The playwright writes the script and expects you, the audience, to listen to the words spoken by the actors to convey a message. As you watch the play in a theater, the story tells itself through the actions and words of the characters on the stage.

On the official GED READING Test, you will read one passage from a play and answer the questions about the play. You will answer approximately 4-6 questions.

THE PURPOSE QUESTION: WHAT IT IS, WHERE IT IS FOUND, AND WHY YOU SHOULD ALWAYS READ IT

At the beginning of every reading is a question. The purpose of the question is to give a reason for reading the material. Use this question to focus your reading. You are not required to answer this question. It is given only to help you concentrate on the ideas presented in the excerpt. Here is a typical purpose question:

HOW DID DEATH VALLEY GET ITS NAME?

Now as you read the following paragraph, focus on the above question.

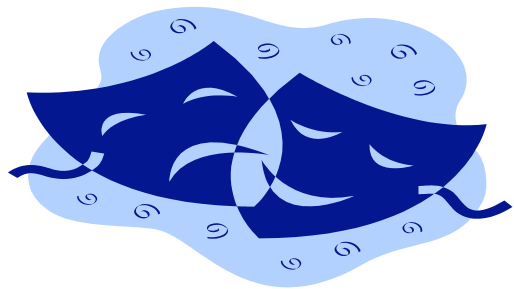
In Death Valley in the United States country. This valley, located in California sea level. It is not uncommon for record of 134 degrees for the nation was by a group of gold seekers in 1849.



is the lowest and hottest spot in the near the Nevada border, is 282 feet below temperatures to reach 125 degrees. A recorded in 1931. Its grim name was given

Learning to recognize the parts of a script: A script has a title and an author or playwright. Then it has:

- a list of characters in the play, sometimes listed in the order of their appearance on stage.
- a list of the major sections the play is divided into or acts.
- the setting of the play, or the place and time the play takes place.
- a dialogue, or the conversations among the characters.
- Stage directions, or suggestions by the playwright as to a character's tone of voice, facial expressions, and actions. Stage directions also explain the setting.



Look at the play, “An Ideal Husband,” by Oscar Wilde. Answer the following questions about the various parts of the script. As in all GED readings, make sure to read the purpose question to guide your thoughts as you’re reading. The purpose question will always be centered above the reading and written in all capital letters. The purpose question for “An Ideal Husband” follows this sentence.

WHERE MIGHT ONE FIND THE IDEAL HUSBAND?

“An Ideal Husband,” by Oscar Wilde

Scanned and proofed by David Price, email ccx074@coventry.ac.uk

THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY

THE EARL OF CAVERSHAM, K.G.
VISCOUNT GORING, his Son
SIR ROBERT CHILTERN, Bart., Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs
VICOMTE DE NANJAC, Attache at the French Embassy in London
MR. MONTFORD

MASON, Butler to Sir Robert Chiltern
PHIPPS, Lord Goring's Servant
JAMES }
HAROLD } Footmen
LADY CHILTERN

LADY MARKBY
THE COUNTESS OF BASILDON
MRS. MARCHMONT
MISS MABEL CHILTERN, Sir Robert Chiltern's Sister
MRS. CHEVELEY

THE SCENES OF THE PLAY

ACT I. The Octagon Room in Sir Robert Chiltern's House in Grosvenor Square.

ACT II. Morning-room in Sir Robert Chiltern's House.

ACT III. The Library of Lord Goring's House in Curzon Street

ACT IV. Same as Act II.

TIME: The Present

PLACE: London.



The action of the play is completed within twenty-four hours.

Answer the following questions about the script before the dialogue begins.



Answers are on page 14.

1. What is the name of the play? _____
2. Who is the playwright? _____
3. How many actors are in the play? _____
4. How is the setting of ACT II and ACT IV similar? _____
5. In what city does the play take place? _____
6. This play covers what period of time? _____

Now read the rest of the dialogue. It includes the dialogue and stage directions. Then answer the next set of questions.

FIRST ACT
SCENE

The Octagon room at Sir Robert Chiltern's house in Grosvenor Square. [The room is brilliantly lighted and full of guests. At the top of the staircase stands LADY CHILTERN, a woman of grave Greek beauty, about twenty-seven years of age. She receives the guests as they come up. Over the well of the staircase hangs a great chandelier



with wax lights, which illumines a large eighteenth-century French tapestry - representing the Triumph of Love, from a design by Boucher - that is stretched on the staircase wall. On the right is the entrance to the music-room. The sound of a string quartette is faintly heard. The entrance on the left leads to other reception-rooms. MRS. MARCHMONT and LADY BASILDON, two very pretty women, are seated together on a Louis Seize sofa. They are types of exquisifragility. Their affectation of manner has a delicate charm. Watteau would have loved to paint them.

MRS. MARCHMONT. Going on to the Hartlocks' to-night, Margaret?

LADY BASILDON. I suppose so. Are you?

MRS. MARCHMONT. Yes. Horribly tedious parties they give, don't they?

LADY BASILDON. Horribly tedious! Never know why I go. Never know why I go anywhere.

MRS. MARCHMONT. I come here to be educated.

LADY BASILDON. Ah! I hate being educated!

MRS. MARCHMONT. So do I. It puts one almost on a level with the commercial classes, doesn't it? But dear Gertrude Chiltern is always telling me that I should have some serious purpose in life. So I come here to try to find one.

LADY BASILDON. [Looking round through her lorgnette.] I don't see anybody here to-night whom one could possibly call a serious purpose. The man who took me in to dinner talked to me about his wife the whole time.

MRS. MARCHMONT. How very trivial of him!

LADY BASILDON. Terribly trivial! What did your man talk about?

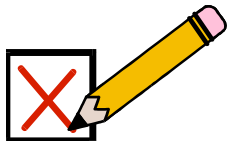
MRS. MARCHMONT. About myself.

LADY BASILDON. [Languidly.] And were you interested?

MRS. MARCHMONT. [Shaking her head.] Not in the smallest degree.

LADY BASILDON. What martyrs we are, dear Margaret.

MRS. MARCHMONT. [Rising.] And how well it becomes us, Olivia!



Now answer these questions. Answers are on page 14.

7. As the curtain rises, what is the setting? _____
8. Who is standing at the top of the staircase? _____
9. What can you hear, before any actor speaks? _____
10. Who speaks first? _____
11. What does she say? _____
12. On page 5, what is Lady Basildon looking through? _____
13. Is this a microscope, a telescope or eyeglasses with a handle? _____
14. As the scene closes, is Mrs. Marchmont standing or sitting? _____

Learning to interpret the dialogue: Now that you can read the parts of the script, let's learn to interpret the dialogue. The dialogue is the story line of the play. In it you will find how the playwright develops the characters, what their motivations are, where there are conflicts, and what theme the playwright is portraying. All the techniques you used in fiction analysis, you will use here in drama.

George Bernard Shaw wrote “Misalliance.” Read the purpose question first, and then begin reading the play. Answer the following questions about this play.

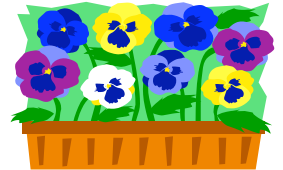
WHO ARE UNSUITABLE FOR EACH OTHER?

“Notes on the editing: Italicized text is delimited with underlines (“_”). Punctuation and spelling are retained as in the printed text. Shaw used a non-standard system of spelling and punctuation. For example, contractions usually have no apostrophe: ‘don’t’ is given as ‘dont’, ‘you’ve’ as ‘youve’, and so on. Abbreviated honorifics have no trailing period: ‘Dr.’ is given as ‘Dr’, ‘Mrs.’ as ‘Mrs’, and so on. ‘Shakespeare’ is given as ‘Shakespear’. Where several characters in the play are speaking at once, I have indicated it with vertical bars (‘|’). The pound (currency) symbol has been replaced by the word ‘pounds’.”



“MISALLIANCE” BY GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

Johnny Tarleton, an ordinary young business man of thirty or less, is taking his weekly Friday to Tuesday in the house of his father, John Tarleton, who has made a great deal of money out of Tarleton's Underwear. The house is in Surrey, on the slope of Hindhead; and Johnny, reclining, novel in hand, in a swinging chair with a little awning above it, is enshrined in a spacious half hemisphere of glass which forms a pavilion commanding the garden, and, beyond it, a barren but lovely landscape of hill profile with fir trees, commons of bracken and gorse, and wonderful cloud pictures._



Bentley Summerhays, one of those smallish, thinskinnyed youths, who from 17 to 70 retain unaltered the mental airs of the later and the physical appearance of the earlier age, appears in the garden and comes through the glass door into the pavilion. He is unmistakably a grade above Johnny socially; and though he looks sensitive enough, his assurance and his high voice are a little exasperating.



JOHNNY. Hallo! Wheres your luggage?

BENTLEY. I left it at the station. Ive walked up from Haslemere.

[He goes to the hat stand and hangs up his hat].

JOHNNY. _[shortly]_ Oh! And whos to fetch it?

BENTLEY. Dont know. Dont care. Providence, probably. If not, your mother will have it fetched.

JOHNNY. Not her business, exactly, is it?

BENTLEY. _[returning to the pavilion]_ Of course not. Thats why one loves her for doing it. Look here: chuck away your silly week-end novel, and talk to a chap. After a week in that filthy office my brain is simply blue-mouldy. Lets argue about something intellectual._[He throws himself into the wicker chair on Johnny's right]._

JOHNNY. _[straightening up in the swing with a yell of protest]_ No. Now seriously, Bunny, Ive come down here to have a pleasant week-end; and I'm not going to stand your confounded arguments. If you want to argue, get out of this and go over to the Congregationalist minister's. He's a nailer at arguing. He likes it.

BENTLEY. You cant argue with a person when his livelihood depends on his not letting you convert him. And would you mind not calling me Bunny. My name is Bentley Summerhays, which you please.

JOHNNY. Whats the matter with Bunny?

BENTLEY. It puts me in a false position. Have you ever considered the fact that I was an afterthought?

JOHNNY. An afterthought? What do you mean by that?



BENTLEY. I--

JOHNNY. No, stop: I dont want to know. It's only a dodge to start an argument.



BENTLEY. Dont be afraid: it wont overtax your brain. My father was 44 when I was born. My mother was 41. There was twelve years between me and the next eldest. I was unexpected. I was probably unintentional. My brothers and sisters are not the least like me. Theyre the regular thing that you always get in the first batch from young parents: quite pleasant, ordinary, do-the-regular-thing sort: all body and no brains, like you.

JOHNNY. Thank you.

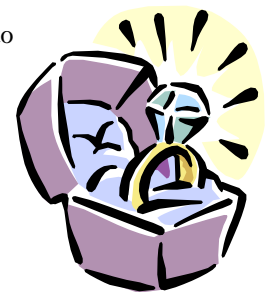
BENTLEY. Dont mention it, old chap. Now I'm different. By the time I was born, the old couple knew something. So I came out all brains and no more body than is absolutely necessary. I am really a good deal older than you, though you were born ten years sooner. Everybody feels that when they hear us talk; consequently, though it's quite natural to hear me calling you Johnny, it sounds ridiculous and unbecoming for you to call me Bunny. _[He rises]_

JOHNNY. Does it, by George? You stop me doing it if you can: that's all.

BENTLEY. If you go on doing it after Ive asked you not, youll feel an awful swine. _[He strolls away carelessly to the sideboard with his eye on the sponge cakes]_ At least I should; but I suppose youre not so particular.

JOHNNY _[rising vengefully and following Bentley, who is forced to turn and listen]_ I'll tell you what it is, my boy: you want a good talking to; and I'm going to give it to you. If you think that because your father's a K.C.B., and you want to marry my sister, you can make yourself as nasty as you please and say what you like, youre mistaken. Let me tell you that except Hypatia, not one person in this house is in favor of her marrying you; and I dont believe shes happy about it herself. The match isnt settled yet: dont forget that.

Youre on trial in the office because the Governor isnt giving his daughter money for an idle man to live on her. Youre on trial here because my mother thinks a girl should know what a man is like in the house before she marries him. Thats been going on for two months now; and whats the result? Youve got yourself thoroughly disliked in the office; and youre getting yourself thoroughly disliked here, all through your bad manners and your conceit, and the damned impudence you think clever.






Circle the correct answer. Answers are on page 14.

1. From the setting and information given in it, you infer that Johnny Tarleton is:
 - A. of the privileged class.
 - B. reading poetry.
 - C. enjoying the rainy weather.

 2. Bentley Summerhays is someone who:
 - A. is large in stature.
 - B. speaks in a deep voice.
 - C. doesn't show his age as he grows older.

 3. Why is the apostrophe missing from the word *wheres* on page 7? (Hint: Make sure you have read *Notes on the editing* at the beginning of the script.)
 - A. It is incorrect grammatically to use an apostrophe in that spot.
 - B. George Bernard Shaw used a non-standard system of punctuation.
 - C. It is a typographical error.

 4. Who is Bunny?
 - A. Bentley
 - B. Johnny
 - C. Johnny's mother
- 
5. From the conversation between Bentley and Johnny, who would more likely to be interested in playing on the quiz show, "Jeopardy"?
 - A. Bentley
 - B. Johnny
 - C. the minister

 6. How do the characters feel about Bentley's up-and-coming marriage to Hypatia?
 - A. The Governor is happily going to consent to the marriage of his daughter.
 - B. Hypatia is the only one happy about her marriage to Bentley, and even she's doubtful at times.
 - C. Johnny is extremely joyous of Bentley's marriage to his sister.



Interactive activity: With a classmate, continue the dialogue between Johnny and Bentley. Where will the argument go? Will the conflict be resolved? Set it up in dialogue form, using stage directions. Compare your dialogue with your classmate. Did you resolve the conflict in the same manner or differently? If you

are working alone, write the dialogue on the lines provided.

A sample dialogue is on page 15.

JOHNNY: _____

BENTLEY:

Use the back of the paper if you need more writing space.

Learning to analyze drama with story elements: As in the analysis of fiction where you use the basic elements of the setting, characterization, plot, and theme, you will use these same guides in the study of drama.

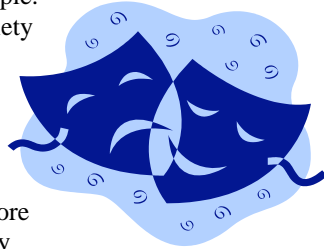
EXERCISE

In the following play, “The Miser” by Moliere, Harpagone (HAR) is the miser. He has two adult children, Elise (ELI) and Cleante (CLE). As the scene opens he is worried about his money. Read the purpose question first, and then read the play.

WHY IS THE MISER SUSPICIOUS OF HIS CHILDREN?

SCENE IV--

HARPAGON (_alone_) This rascally valet is a constant vexation to me; and I hate the very sight of the good-for-nothing cripple. Really, it is no small anxiety to keep by one a large sum of money; and happy is the man who has all his cash well invested, and who needs not keep by him more than he wants for his daily expenses. I am not a little puzzled to find in the whole of this house a safe hiding-place. Don't speak to me of your strong boxes, I will never trust to them. Why, they are just the very things thieves set upon!



SCENE V.--_HARPAGON; ELISE and CLEANTE are seen talking together at the back of the stage._

HAR. (_thinking himself alone_) Meanwhile, I hardly know whether I did right to bury in my garden the ten thousand crowns which were paid to me yesterday. Ten thousand crowns in gold is a sum sufficiently.... (_Aside, on perceiving_ ELISE _and_ CLEANTE _whispering together_) Good heavens! I have betrayed myself; my warmth has carried me away. I believe I spoke aloud while reasoning with myself. (_To_ CLEANTE _and_ ELISE) What do you want?

CLE. Nothing, father.

HAR. Have you been here long?

ELI. We have only just come.

HAR. Did you hear...?

CLE. What, father?

HAR. There...!

CLE. What?

HAR. What I was just now saying.

CLE. No.

HAR. You did. I know you did.

ELI. I beg your pardon, father, but we did not.

HAR. I see well enough that you overheard a few words. The fact is, I was only talking to myself about the trouble one has nowadays to raise any money; and I was saying that he is a fortunate man who has ten thousand crowns in his house.

CLE. We were afraid of coming near you, for fear of intruding.

HAR. I am very glad to tell you this, so that you may not misinterpret things, and imagine that I said that it was I who have ten thousand crowns.

CLE. We do not wish to interfere in your affairs.

HAR. Would that I had them, these ten thousand crowns!

CLE. I should not think that....

HAR. What a capital affair it would be for me.

CLE. There are things....

HAR. I greatly need them.

CLE. I fancy that....

HAR. It would suit me exceedingly well.

ELI. You are....

HAR. And I should not have to complain, as I do now, that the times are bad.

CLE. Dear me, father, you have no reason to complain; and everyone knows that you are well enough off.



HAR. How? I am well enough off! Those who say it are liars. Nothing can be more false; and they are scoundrels who spread such reports.

ELI. Don't be angry.

HAR. It is strange that my own children betray me and become my enemies.

CLE. Is it being your enemy to say that you have wealth?

HAR. Yes, it is. Such talk and your extravagant expenses will be the cause that some day thieves will come and cut my throat, in the belief that I am made of gold.

CLE. What extravagant expenses do I indulge in?

HAR. What! Is there anything more scandalous than this sumptuous attire with which you jaunt it about the town? I was remonstrating with your sister

yesterday, but you are still worse. It cries vengeance to heaven; and were we to calculate all you are wearing, from head to foot, we should find enough for a good annuity. I have told you a hundred times, my son, that your manners displease me exceedingly; you affect the marquis terribly, and for you to be always dressed as you are, you must certainly rob me.

CLE. Rob you? And how?

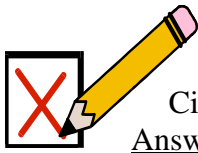
HAR. How should I know? Where else could you find money enough to clothe yourself as you do?

CLE. I, father? I play; and as I am very lucky, I spend in clothes all the money I win.

HAR. It is very wrong. If you are lucky at play, you should profit by it, and place the money you win at decent interest, so that you may find it again some day. I should like to know, for instance, without mentioning the rest, what need there is for all these ribbons with which you are decked from head to foot, and if half a dozen tags are not sufficient to fasten your breeches. What necessity is there for anyone to spend money upon wigs, when we have hair of our own growth, which costs nothing. I will lay a wager that, in wigs and ribbons alone, there are certainly twenty pistoles spent, and twenty pistoles brings in at least eighteen livres six sous eight deniers per annum, at only eight per cent interest.

CLE. You are quite right.





Circle the correct answer.
Answers are on page 15.

1. In scene IV, the miser, Harpagone, speaks out loud about his money problems. The problem is:
 - (1) where to keep his money.
 - (2) how to get rid of his valet.
 - (3) how to use a safe for his money.
 - (4) how to invest his money.
 - (5) how to keep his valet from stealing his money.
2. In scene V, who has buried ten thousand crown in the back yard?
 - (1) the valet
 - (2) Harpagone
 - (3) Elise
 - (4) Cleante
 - (5) the son
3. What is Harpagone's problem or conflict?
 - (1) He can't remember where he buried the money.
 - (2) He doesn't want the thieves to know where he buried the money.
 - (3) His daughter has become his enemy by taking the money.
 - (4) The son robbed him and spent the money on wigs.
 - (5) He thinks his son and daughter heard him say to himself where he has buried the money.
4. The setting is in:
 - (1) modern times.
 - (2) days of royalty.
 - (3) days of the Vikings.
 - (4) prehistoric time.
 - (5) futuristic time.
5. Why is the son able to dress so well?
 - (1) He has been stealing from his father.
 - (2) He has a good tailor.
 - (3) He gambles and is lucky and spends his money on clothes.
 - (4) The sister pays for his clothes.
 - (5) He wins money by playing Lotto.

Page 2: Words You Need to Know

1. T
2. T
3. F A change of heart is an example of an **internal conflict**.
4. T
5. F A **passage** is not the complete play, rather only a part of a play.

Page 5: Parts of a Script

1. “An Ideal Husband”
2. Oscar Wilde
3. 15
4. They both take place in the morning-room of Sir Robert Chiltern’s House.
5. London
6. twenty-four hours

Page 6: Parts of a Script

7. The Octagon room at Sir Robert Chiltern’s house in Grosvenor Square
8. Lady Chiltern
9. the sound of a string quartette
10. Mrs. Marchmont
11. “Going on to the Hartlock’s to-night, Margaret?”
12. her lorgnette
13. eyeglasses with a handle
14. standing

Page 9: Dialogue

1. **A Comprehension (inference)** From the details such as: taking a long weekend (Friday through Tuesday), reclining in a glass pavilion, and the expansive view the house looks out upon, lead one to conclude Johnny is well off.
2. **C Comprehension (supporting details)** On page 7 from the phrase “who from 17 to 70 retain unaltered the mental airs of the later and the physical appearance of the earlier age”, one can assume Bentley doesn’t look his age.
3. **B Comprehension (supporting details)** In *Notes on editing*, it noted that George Bernard Shaw did not use apostrophes in contractions.
4. **A Comprehension (supporting details)** On page 7, Bentley discusses why he doesn’t like being called Bunny.
5. **A Analysis (inference)** Bentley likes to show how smart he is by arguing and likes verbal confrontations, so he would be more likely to be a contestant on the quiz show.

6. **B Comprehension (supporting details)** On page 8, the marriage is discussed for the first time.

Page 10: Interactive Activity (Sample answer)

Johnny: Yes, Bentley, I've about had it with your rude behavior! (Getting red in the face). You have no regard for anyone but yourself.

Bentley: Well, you know old chap, I think, in a way you're right. I've gone a little overboard, and I need to pull back some. (He walks over to the table and pours himself a drink.)

Johnny: There you go again. It would be a lot more polite to wait to be asked if you'd like a drink instead of helping yourself! (Snatches drink from Bentley's hand.)

Bentley: Now, now. I'm almost family. Don't get so touchy.

Johnny: As far as I'm concerned, you are miles away from being part of our family.

Page 13: Exercise

1. **(1) Comprehension (supporting details)** Because the Miser is afraid someone is going to steal his money, he is worried where to put the money.
2. **(2) Comprehension (supporting details)** On page 11, he quietly says to himself what he has done with the money.
3. **(5) Analysis** His conflict is within himself since he is not sure if his children heard him say where he put the money.
4. **(2) Comprehension (conclusion)** On page 12 the word, marquis, is mentioned, which would lead one to believe the story takes place when people frequently held titles of royalty.
5. **(3) Comprehension (supporting details)** As mentioned on page 12, his wardrobe is funded by the money he makes playing games.