

EXERCISES

I .Write a short note on H. L. Mencken.

[SRB]

1. The Author's and Writer's Who's Who
2. The Oxford Companion to American Literature

II .Questions on content:

1. What activity is the writer referring to in his phrase 'its most lucrative and characteristic activity'? (para 1)
2. What 'aspiration' of man is reduced to a depressing joke by the ugliness the writer sees in this region?
3. What kind of houses cover the hillsides? What kind of houses does the writer suggest for this region?
4. What does Mencken say about the color of these houses?
5. Was the valley full of foreigners? (para 6)
6. Does Mencken believe that these people built such ugly houses because they were just ignorant? What is his explanation for the ugliness in America?
7. Is the writer serious in his suggestions for research in psychology and pathological sociology in his final paragraph?

III. Questions on appreciation:

1. Why does Mencken use the uncommon word libido in his title?
2. How is para 1 developed? What effect does the powerful contrast in the last two sentences of para 1 have on the reader?
3. Why does Mencken refer to other towns and villages in America (para 5), to the villages of Europe (para 6) and to the Parthenon (para 8)?
4. Besides attacking the ugliness of Westmoreland, what else does Mencken attack in this essay?
5. Is the satirical power of Mencken's attack simply a result of his choice of words, of his diction? Is his scathing tone also achieved through structure and image? Cite examples.
6. Are all the similes, metaphors and hyperboles used appropriately and effectively in this essay?
7. Does Mencken achieve or defeat his own purpose by using so many striking metaphors and hyperboles?

IV. Paraphrase:

1. boy and man, I had been through it often before (para 1)
2. But somehow I had never quite sensed its appalling desolation.(para 1)
3. it reduced the whole aspiration of man to a macabre and depressing joke (para 1)
4. The country itself is not uncomely, despite the grime of the endless mills. (para 3)
5. They have taken as their model a brick set on end. (para 3)
6. This they have converted into a thing of dingy clapboards, with a narrow,

low-pitched roof. (para 3)

7. When it has taken on the patina of the mills it is the color of an egg long past all hope or caring. (para 4)

8. Red brick, even in a steel town, ages with some dignity. (para 4)

9. I award this championship only after laborious research and incessant prayer. (para 5)

10. They show grotesqueries of ugliness that, in retrospect, become almost diabolical. (para5)

11. It is incredible that mere ignorance should have achieved such masterpieces of horror. (para 6)

12. On certain levels of the American race, indeed, there seems to be a positive libido for the ugly (para 7)

13. They meet, in some unfathomable way, its obscure and unintelligible demands. (para 7)

14. they made it perfect in their own sight by putting a completely impossible penthouse, painted a staring yellow, on top of it (para 8)

15. Out of the melting pot emerges a race which hates beauty as it hates truth. (para 9)

V. Translate paras 1 and 2 into Chinese.

VI. Look up the dictionary and explain the meaning of the italicized words:

1. coming out of Pittsburgh on one of the expresses of the Pennsylvania Railroad (para 1)

2. I rolled eastward for an hour (para 1)

3. the sheer revolting monstrousness (para 2)

4. somewhere further down the line (para 2)

5. from the Pittsburgh suburbs to the Greensburg yards (para 2)

6. they are streaked in grime (para 3)

7. and it is still sightly (para 4)

8. Safe in a Pullman, I have whirled through the gloomy, Godforsaken villages (para 5)

9. save perhaps in the more putrid parts of England (para 6)

10. it has been yielded to with an eagerness bordering upon passion (para 6)

11. the pull is always toward ugliness (para 6)

12. On certain levels of the American race (para 7)

13. It is impossible to put down the wallpaper. ... to mere inadvertence (para 7)

14. by putting a completely impossible penthouse (para 8)

VII. Discriminate the following groups of synonyms:

1. dirt, filth, soot, grime

2. libido, passion, love, lust

VIII. Give ten synonymous and/or related words of the word hideous (meaning ' ugly').

Give words of the same part of speech.

IX. Give ten antonymous and/or contrasted words of the word ugliness. Give words of the same part of speech.

X. Study the suffixes of the following adjectives and list 5 - 10 examples of each:

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------|
| 1. lucrative | 5. swinish |
| 2. characteristic | 6. biological |
| 3. horrible | 7. loathsome |
| 4. ghastly | 8. hideous |

[SRB]

1. Walker's Rhyming Dictionary
2. any book on lexicology or word building

XI. Pick out from the text all the words or phrases that are used to describe ugliness.

XII. Replace the italicized words with simple, everyday words or expressions:

1. Here was the very heart of industrial America, the center of its most lucrative and characteristic activity ()
2. and here were human habitations so abominable that they would have disgraced a race of alley cats ()
3. What I allude to is the unbroken and agonizing ugliness ()
4. there was not one in sight from the train that did not insult and lacerate the eye ()
5. And the whole they have set upon thin, preposterous brick piers. ()
6. Not a fifth of them are perpendicular. ()
7. They lean this way and that, hanging on to their bases precariously. ()
8. I award this championship only after laborious research and incessant prayer. ()
9. It is as if some titanic and aberrant genius, uncompromisingly inimical to man, had devoted all the ingenuity of Hell to the making of them. ()
10. Are they so frightful because the valley is full of foreigners--dull, insensate brutes, with no love of beauty in them? ()
11. Then why didn't these foreigners set up similar abominations in the countries that they came from? ()
12. It is impossible to put down the wallpaper that defaces the average American home of the lower middle class to mere inadvertence, or to the obscene humor of the manufacturers. () ()
13. Certainly there was no pressure upon the Veterans of Foreign Wars to choose the dreadful edifice that bears their banner ()
14. The etiology of this madness deserves a great deal more study than it has got. ()

XIII. In this essay, the author uses many metaphors and similes to describe the ugliness of Westmoreland county. Comment on the appropriateness of some of them

XIV. This essay abounds in hyperboles. Comment on the effectiveness of some of

them

XV. The tone of the essay is extremely sarcastic. Try to point out the places where sarcasm, ridicule or irony is employed.

XVI. Read the following paragraphs and prepare to discuss: 1) What is the topic sentence of the paragraph? 2) In what pattern are the specific details arranged?

1. The "Band Wagon" is a device to make us follow the crowd, to accept the propagandist's program en masse. Here his theme is "Everybody's doing it." His techniques range from those of the medicine show to dramatic spectacle. He hires a hall, fills a great stadium, marches a million men in parade. He employs symbols, colors, music, movement, all the dramatic arts. He appeals to the desire, common to most of us, to "follow the crowd." Because he wants us to "follow the crowd" in masses, he directs his appeal to groups held together by common ties of nationality, religion, race, environment, sex, vocation. Thus propagandists campaigning for or against a program will appeal to us as Catholics, Protestants, or Jews; as members of the Nordic race or as Negroes; as farmers or as school teachers; as housewives or as miners. All the artifices of flattery are used to harness the fears and hatreds, prejudices and biases, convictions and ideals common to the group; thus emotion is made to push and pull the group on to the Band Wagon. In newspaper article and in the spoken word this device is also found. "Don't throw your vote away. Vote for our candidate. He's sure to win." Nearly every candidate wins in every election--before the votes are in.

2. If you pick twenty adults at random, the odds are that fifteen of them drink moderately, two are problem drinkers and one is a desperate alcoholic. Two who use alcohol are also using marijuana, a couple are taking tranquilizers on doctors' orders and one or two have been popping barbiturates to relieve insomnia and are perilously close to addiction. Three or four have taken amphetamines to stay awake or to lose weight and nearly all of them drink caffeine, another stimulant. Ten or twelve of this group of twenty continue to smoke tobacco even after the medical hazards of that habit have been amply documented. One has probably taken acid or mescaline. The children of some have sniffed glue or carbon tet for kicks (thereby risking brain and liver damage), more smoke pot and some have had an LSD trip. The drug culture, as the newspapers call it, doesn't just belong to the kids; everyone's in it together.

XVII. Topics for oral work:

1. Discuss Mencken's style--its strong points, its weak points.
2. Comment on Mencken's statement: "Out of the melting pot emerges a race which hates beauty as it hates truth."

XVIII. Write a satirical attack on ugliness, describing:

1. women's (or men's) clothing styles
 2. any city or village
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习题全解

I. Henry Louis Mencken (1880--1956) was the first American to be widely read as a critic. He was born in Baltimore, Md., on Sept. 12, 1880, and privately educated there. After graduating from Baltimore Polytechnic Institute at the age of 16, he became a reporter on the Baltimore Herald. He rose rapidly, soon he was the Herald's city editor and then editor. In 1906 Mencken joined the organization known as the Sunpaper, which he served in a variety of ways until his retirement. Mencken's journalistic skill became his chief handicap as a critic. He had also carried out a fruitful study of the American Language, with some comprehensive works published in this field. By the time of his death on Jan. 29, 1956, in his beloved Baltimore, recognition of his service to the language was everywhere admitted.

1. The writer is referring to industrial production which is the most lucrative and characteristic activity in the United States.

2. All the noble aspirations of a man for a better, fuller and more beautiful life here on earth.

3. All the houses were ugly. The houses look like bricks set on end. They were made of clapboards, with narrow, low-pitched roofs. And the whole house is set upon thin brick piers. All the houses are streaked with grime and many of them are not even perpendicular but they lean this way and that. The writer suggests a chalet-type house for the hill sides. A chalet with high-pitched roof, to throw off the heavy winter snows, but still essentially a low and clinging building, wider than it was tall.

4. According to the writer, the house has the most loathsome color. The color of a fried egg when and after some time they take on the color of uremic yellow.

5. Strictly speaking, no. Most of them were most probably U.S. citizens of European origin, with perhaps a few recent immigrants from Europe.

6. Mencken doesn't believe that mere ignorance was the reason for such ugliness. He believes on certain levels of the American race, there seems to be a great passion for the ugly. Ugliness seems to give some sort of satisfaction to this type of mind. Mencken, however, doesn't understand they have such tastes.

7. No, he is only implying in a sarcastic tone, that he doesn't understand why so many Americans seem to love ugliness for its own sake. He doesn't understand the psychology of these people who lust to make the world intolerable. He thinks these people have a diseased mind.

III

1. Mencken deliberately uses the word "libido", a special term in psychoanalysis, in his title to create the impression that his description and analysis has some scientific foundation.

2. Paragraph 1 is developed by contrasting the great wealth of this region to the abominable human habitations seen everywhere. The last two sentences bring home to readers that ugliness is not due to poverty, but to something innate in the American character--a love of ugliness for its own sake, or, as the title says, the libido for the ugly.

3. Mencken refers to other towns and villages in America, to the villages of Europe and to the Parthenon in order to emphasize the ugliness of Westmoreland County. He means to say Westmoreland is the ugliest spot on earth and the United States as a whole is uglier than Europe.

4. The author also attacks the whole American race – a race that loves ugliness for its own sake, that lusts to make the world intolerable; a race which hates beauty as it hates truth (see the text, para. 9)

5. The satirical power of the author's attack in this essay is not only a result of his choice of words, of his diction, but also his masterly employment of the various rhetoric means such as metaphors, similes, hyperboles and so on. Examples may be referred to the answers to Exs. XIII, XIV, XV.

6. So far as the point which the author wanted to make is concerned, all the metaphors, similes and hyperboles are used appropriately and effectively.

7. As a rule, an excessive use of strong language in writing tends to be self-defeating. Mencken uses a lot of hyperboles to exaggerate and also makes abundant use of sarcasm, ridicule and irony to taunt the jeer in the essay. It may lead the average reader to doubt the objectivity and fairness or even the honesty of the writer. He may feel the writer perhaps has a special axe to grind and lose interest in what he has to say. So one might say Mencken employs all the force of diction, structure and figures only to batter his readers into insensitivity.

IV.

1. As a boy and later when I was a grown-up man, I had often travelled through the region.

2. But somehow in the past I never really perceived how shocking and wretched this whole region was.

3. This dreadful scene makes all human endeavors to advance and improve their lot appear as a ghastly, saddening joke.

4. The country itself is pleasant to look at, despite the sooty dirt spread by the innumerable mills in this region.

5. The model they followed in building their houses was a brick standing upright. / All the houses they built looked like bricks standing upright.

6. These brick-like houses were made of shabby, thin wooden boards and their roofs were narrow and had little slope.

7. When the brick is covered with the black soot of the mills it takes on the color of a rotten egg.

8. Red brick, even in a steel town, looks quite respectable with the passing of time. / Even in a steel town, old red bricks still appear pleasing to the eye.

9. I have given Westmoreland the highest award for ugliness after having done a lot of hard work and research and after continuous praying.

10. They show such fantastic and bizarre ugliness that, in looking back, they become almost fiendish and wicked. / When one looks back at these houses whose ugliness is so fantastic and bizarre, one feels they must be the work of the devil himself.

11. It is hard to believe that people built such horrible houses just because they did not know what beautiful houses were like.

12. People in certain strata of American society seem definitely to hunger after ugly things; while in other less Christian strata, people seem to long for things beautiful.

13. These ugly designs, in some way that people cannot understand, satisfy the hidden and unintelligible demands of this type of mind.

14. They put a penthouse on top of it, painted in a bright, conspicuous yellow color and thought it looked perfect but they only managed to make it absolutely intolerable.

15. From the intermingling of different nationalities and races in the United States emerges the American race which hates beauty as strongly as it hates truth.

V. See the translation of the text.

VI.

1. express: a fast, direct train。 Making few stops

2. roll: travel in a wheeled vehicle(here an express train)

3. revolting: disgusting

4. line: railway line

5. yard: a railway center where trains are made up, serviced, switched from track to track。 etc.

6. streak: mark with streaks(a line or long, thin mark)

7. sightly: pleasant to the sight

8. pullman: a railroad car with private compartments or seats that can be made up into berths for sleeping. It is so-called after the U. S. inventor, George。

M. Pullman(1831— 1897).

9. save: except。 but

10. yield: surrender, give into border upon: be like, almost be

11. pull: drawing force. appeal

12. level: position。 elevation, or rank considered as one of the planes in a scale of values

13. put down(to): attribute(to)

14. impossible: not capable of being endured, used。 agreed to, etc. , because of being disagreeable or unsuitable: hard to tolerate

VII.

1. dirt 指任何不清洁的或玷污之物, 如泥土、灰尘、粪便、垃圾; filth 一词用来表示脏得令人作呕的东西; soot 是指主要由炭粒构成, 由物质的不完全燃烧所形成的一种黑色物质; grime 指沉积在表面上或嵌入表面之中的煤烟或小颗粒状污秽。

2. love 意指强烈的喜爱或深刻的倾心, 可用于表示各种不同的关系或用于各种对象(如性爱、手足之爱、对工作之爱等); passion 通指一种具有压倒或强制性的强烈情绪, 如: His passions overcame his reason. (他的激情压倒了他的理智。); lust 指一种欲望, 特别是那种寻求不受拘束的满足——感官满足, 尤

其是性满足的欲望；libido 是精神分析学 上的一个术语，能指精神上的能量，通指精神能量的一种基本形式，包含积极的、爱的本能，并在性格发展的不同阶段中表现出来。

VII. hideous。horrid。horrible, frightful, dreadful, terrible, awful, repulsive, repugnant, ghastly, revolting

IX. beauty. beautifulnness。prettiness, handsomeness, attractiveness, loveliness, charm, pulchritude, grace, elegance, exquisiteness

X.

1. lucrative, creative, destructive, indicative, fricative, e vocative, sedative, negative, interrogative, relative, con templative

2. characteristic, realistic, artistic, egotistic, altruistic, im pressionistic, antagonistic, chauvinistic, humanistic, opti mistic, pressimistic

3. horrible, divisible, legible, invincible, edible, incredible, elegible。negligible, audible, intelligible, infallible

4. ghastly, harshly, finely, loosely, delicately, tersely, fear somely, deathly, steadfastly, curtly, eloquently

5. swinish, piggish, sluggish, doggish, hoggish, kittenish, owlsh, ghoulish, girlsh”fiendish, devilish

6. biological, theological, physiological, etymological, an thropological, astrological, bacteriological, psychologi cal, geological, archeological, mythological

7. 10athsome, gladsome, ti’resome, venturesome, trouble some。burdensome, cumbersome, frolicsome, gruesome, quarrelsome, fearsome

8 . hideous , outrageous , courageous , advantageous , contem poraneous. extemporaneous, simultaneous, spontaneous' instantaneous, extraneous, erroneous

XI. appalling desolation, dreadfully, hideous, intolerably, bleak, forlorn, abominable, filth, dirty, ugliness, revolt ing, monstrousness, horrible, leprous, hideousness, mis shapen, shabby, uncomely, grime, dingy, decaying, swin ishly, eczematous patches, shocking, uremic yellow, loath- some, unlovely, decomposing, gloomy, God-forsaken, malarious, grotesqueries of ugliness, diabolical, frightful, abominations, putrid, horror, deface, ghastly, depravity, etc.

XI. 1. profitable 2. dwellings, homes 3. refer to 4. wound, hurt 5. absurd, ridiculous 6. exactly upright, vertical 7. unsafely, insecurely 8. continual, repeated 9. unfriendly, hostile 10. insensitive, without feelings 11. hateful or dis gusting things 12. spoil the appearance of, disfigure care- lessness, oversight 13. building 14. causes

XI. The many metaphors and similes in the essay are largely ap propritately used in describing the ugliness of Westmoreland County. For example, in para. 3 the metaphor of comparing the houses there to pigs wallowing in the mud~ the metaphor

in the same para. of comparing the patches of paint to dried up scales formed by a skin disease~ and the simile in para. 2 as shown in the sentence "one blinks ... shot away", the simile in the same para. as shown in the sentence "a steel stadium ~ -- the line", just to mention a few. Hyperboles are profusely used in the essay. They are mostly very effective in conveying what the author had to say. In para. 1, we read the sentence "Here was wealth ... alley cats", exaggerating the richness and grandeur of this region and of America as a whole, the boast and pride of the richest and grandest nation ever seen on earth ; in para. 5 we read "It is as if ... of them", which implies exaggeratedly that it is as if some genius of great power, who didn't like to do the right things and who was an inflexible enemy of man, employed all the cleverness and skill of hell to build these ugly houses; and again in para. 2 there is the sentence "What a lude to " in sight", which suggests an exaggeration that is hard to believe. Not every house could have been that ugly.

XV. In the essay, sarcasm, ridicule or irony is employed profuse. The following are just a few examples:

1. (Para. 2) "a steel stadium "" the line. " This description sounds ridiculous.
2. (Para. 3) "Obviously "-" the hillside. " We read evident sarcasm in this sentence.
3. (Para. 4) "When it was taken -"" or caring. " Here both ridicule and irony are suggested.
4. (Para. 5) "I award "" prayer. " We read both sarcasm and irony in this sentence.
5. (Para. 5) "They are "" in design. " Sarcasm is most apparent in the description.
6. (Para. 6) "It is incredible "" of horror. " Here the author obviously means to present the picture sarcastically and ironically.

XVI.

1. The topic sentence is: The "Band Wagon" is a device to make us follow the crowd, to accept the propagandist's program en masse. The paragraph beginning with a topic sentence is a high level generalization. Each sentence in the rest of the paragraph states specific details that develop the main idea. This paragraph has a simple deductive arrangement.

2. The main idea in this paragraph is stated in the last sentence: The drug culture, as the newspapers call it, doesn't just belong to the kids; everyone's in it together. The writer reverses the usual rule "go from the general to the particular". He develops his topic sentence by specific, concrete detail--but he places the topic sentence at the end of the paragraph. That is, he follows an inductive pattern.

XII. Omitted.

XVII. A Sickening Village This is a village you will never want to revisit once you had been there. The road is grit-paved and dotted with sand and small stones here and there. If you happen to have a pair of thin-sole shoes, your feet are certain to suffer. On a sunny day, if a truck or a tractor passes by, you are covered with dust left behind. On a rainy day, your trouser legs soon get dirty with muddy water. Here and there,

you may find a pile of building materials such as bricks, cement boards, sand casually lying in a disorderly way. There are trees on one side of the road. Some are a little tall, some quite short, and on each tree you cannot fail to find broken branches. As for the houses, they are in different size, different height, and different colour. They stand there one after another with no harmony. If you want your students to search for the antonym of "unity", just bring them here. You can see a pond at the end of the road. Actually you needn't see it. Use your nose and the smell will make you sicken. Floating on the brownish filthy water are used wrapping paper, plastic bags, foams, and one or two dead dogs or mice.