Testing Your Multiple-Choice Test-Wiseness
(Adapted from Constructing Classroom Tests: Why and How, James Eison, Southeast Missouri State University, Cape Girardeau, MO, 1985)

DIRECTIONS: The seven multiple-choice questions below cover historical topics that you are not likely to know. See if you are able to determine the correct answer by carefully reading each item. Please circle the correct answer for each item.

1. The Locarno pact:
   a. is an international agreement for the maintenance of peace through the guarantee of national boundaries of France, Germany, Italy, and Belgium.
   b. allowed France to occupy the Ruhr Valley.
   c. provided for the dismemberment of Austria-Hungary.
   d. provided for the protection of Red Cross bases during war times.

2. The disputed Hayes-Tilden election of 1876 was settled by an:
   a. resolution of the House of Representatives.
   b. decision of the United States Supreme Court.
   c. Electoral Commission
   d. joint resolution of Congress.

3. The august character of the work of Pericles in Athens frequently causes his work to be likened to that in Rome of:
   a. Augustus.
   b. Sulla.
   c. Pompey.
   d. Claudius.

4. The Declaration of the Rights of Man was:
   a. adopted by the French National Assembly.
   b. adopted by every Western European legislature.
   c. immediately ratified by every nation in the world.
   d. hailed by every person in England.

5. The Locarno pact:
   a. was an agreement between Greece and Turkey.
   b. gave the Tyrol to Italy.
   c. was a conspiracy to blow up the League of Nations’ building at Locarno.
   d. guaranteed the boundary arrangements in Western Europe.
6. Horace in the 16th Epode emphasizes the:

a. despair of the average man confronted by sweeping social change.
b. elation of the average man confronted by sweeping social change.
c. optimism of the common man about sweeping social change.
d. all of the above.

7. About what fraction of the 1920 population of the United States was foreign-born?

a. less than five percent.
b. between fourteen and twenty-eight percent.
c. twenty-five percent.
d. between thirty and fifty percent.

Some of these items may have been answered correctly even with little or no exposure to the content. All of these “clues” should be avoided when developing items. Many “test-wise” students are able to guess the correct answers to all of the items in the exercise and would make the same guesses if the same items were administered a second time. Thus, the test would be reliable, but the results would not be valid as a measure of achievement of course content. By following the test blueprint and the guidelines offered on the next pages, the chances of achieving valid and reliable test results are increased.

“Designing Multiple-Choice Tests That Foster and Reflect Learning Outcomes,” SACSCOC Annual Meeting 2012, Dr. Teresa L. Flateby, Associate Vice President, Institutional Effectiveness, Georgia Southern University, Statesboro, GA
DEPARTMENT OF LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY
GENERAL EDUCATION STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Historical and Cultural Perspectives Outcome

Students are able to analyze artifacts, events, concepts, or themes within evolving historical and cultural contexts.

revised Spring 2012

ENGL 2111 (World Literature I) & ENGL 2112 (World Literature II) Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, a student should be able to:

- Classify familiarity with literary language, periods, and genres.
- Analyze literary texts in their cultural contexts.
- Differentiate the features of literatures produced by various world cultures.
### Test Blueprint

**Projected Breakdown of Questions and Levels for World Lit II**

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### Alignment of Items with Outcomes and Cognitive Levels – Spring 2012

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**Exam Item Analysis Report - Spring 2012**

**Exams Graded: 57**

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**Exam Date:** Monday, June 11, 2012

Correct responses are shown in bold and italics

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Epitaph - Dennis Scott

They hanged him on a clement morning, swung between the falling sunlight and the women's breathing, like a black apostrophe to pain. All morning, while the children hushed their hop-scotch joy and the cane kept growing, he hung there, sweet and low.

At least, that's how they tell it. It was long ago. And what can we recall of a dead slave or two, except that, when we punctuate our island tale, they swing like sighs across the brutal sentences, and anger pauses till they pass away.

2. Why is there no question mark at the end of this poem? **Analysis**

   A. The answer is obvious.
   B. The speaker is turning a question into a statement.
   C. The question is addressed to the dead.
   D. The question is not complete.

3. "They swing like sighs across the brutal / sentences, . . ." illustrates which literary technique? **Comprehension**

   A. Consonance
   B. Personification
   C. Allegory
   D. Synecdoche
4. In which country was this poem written?  **Analysis**

A. Ireland  
B. Jamaica  
C. England  
D. South Africa

7. Whose anger pauses in line 12?  **Comprehension**

A. The breathing women  
B. The dead slaves  
C. The lynch mob  
D. The tellers of the island tale

8. "like a black apostrophe to pain" is an example of  **Comprehension**

A. Simile  
B. Metaphor  
C. Synecdoche  
D. Metonymy

"The White Man's Burden" - Rudyard Kipling

**Take up the White Man's burden--**  
Send forth the best ye breed--  
Go bind your sons to exile  
To serve your captives' need;  
To wait in heavy harness,  
On fluttered folk and wild--  
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,  
Half-devil and half-child.  

13. What is the rhyme scheme of the first stanza?  **Application**

A. [A B A B C D C D]  
B. [A B C B D E F E]  
C. [A B B A C D D C]  
D. [A B C D A B C D]

**sullen:** bad-tempered and sulky; gloomy
The Affective Domain
(Krathwohl, Bloom, Masia, 1973)

Receiving Phenomena: Awareness, willingness to hear, selected attention.

asks, chooses, describes, follows, gives, holds, identifies, locates, names, points to, selects, sits, erects, replies, uses

Responding to Phenomena: Active participation on the part of the learners. Attends and reacts to a particular phenomenon. Learning outcomes may emphasize compliance in responding, willingness to respond, or satisfaction in responding (motivation).

answers, assists, aids, complies, conforms, discusses, greets, helps, labels, performs, practices, presents, reads, recites, reports, selects, tells, writes

Valuing: The worth or value a person attaches to a particular object, phenomenon, or behavior. This ranges from simple acceptance to the more complex state of commitment. Valuing is based on the internalization of a set of specified values, while clues to these values are expressed in the learner's overt behavior and are often identifiable.

completes, demonstrates, differentiates, explains, follows, forms, initiates, invites, joins, justifies, proposes, reads, reports, selects, shares, studies, works
Organization: Organizes values into priorities by contrasting different values, resolving conflicts between them, and creating an unique value system. The emphasis is on comparing, relating, and synthesizing values.

Internalizing values (characterization): Has a value system that controls their behavior. The behavior is pervasive, consistent, predictable, and most importantly, characteristic of the learner. Instructional objectives are concerned with the student's general patterns of adjustment (personal, social, emotional).

http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/hrd/bloom.html#affective
Abilities and Behaviors and Illustrative Action Verbs Related to Bloom’s Taxonomy of Educational Objectives

**Knowledge** – Recognizes students’ ability to use rote memorization and recall certain facts.

cite, define, identify, label, list, match, name, recognize, reproduce, select, state

**Comprehension** – Involves students’ ability to read course content, extrapolate and interpret important information and put other’s ideas into their own words.

Classify, convert, describe, distinguish between, explain, extend, give examples, illustrate, interpret, paraphrase, summarize, translate

**Application** – Students take new concepts and apply them to another situation.

Apply, arrange, compute, construct, demonstrate, discover, modify, operate, predict, prepare, produce, relate, show, solve, use

**Analysis** – Students have the ability to take new information and break it down into parts to differentiate between them.

Analyze, associate, determine, diagram, differentiate, discriminate, distinguish, estimate, infer, order, outline, point out, separate, subdivide

**Synthesis** – Students are able to take various pieces of information and form a whole creating a pattern where one did not previously exist.

Combine, compile, compose, construct, create, design, develop, devise, formulate, integrate, modify, organize, plan, propose, rearrange, reorganize, revise, rewrite, tell, write
Evaluation – Involves students’ ability to look at someone else’s ideas or principles and see the worth of the work and the value of the conclusions.

| Appraise, assess, compare, conclude, contrast, criticize, discriminate, evaluate, judge, justify, support, weigh |

References:

14 RULES FOR WRITING MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. Use Plausible Distractors (wrong-response options)
   • Only list plausible distractors, even if the number of options per question changes
   • Write the options so they are homogeneous in content
   • Use answers given in previous open-ended exams to provide realistic distractors

2. Use a Question Format
   • Experts encourage multiple-choice items to be prepared as questions (rather than incomplete statements)

   Incomplete Statement Format:
   The capital of California is in ________________ ← Less Effective

   Direct Question Format:
   In which of the following cities is the capital of California? ← More Effective

3. Emphasize Higher-Level Thinking
   • Use memory-plus application questions. These questions require students to recall principles, rules or facts in a real life context.
   • The key to preparing memory-plus application questions is to place the concept in a life situation or context that requires the student to first recall the facts and then apply or transfer the application of those facts into a situation.
   • Seek support from others who have experience writing higher-level thinking multiple-choice questions.

EXAMPLES:

Memory Only Example

Which description best characterizes whole foods?
   a. orange juice ← Less Effective
   b. toast
   c. bran cereal
   d. grapefruit

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Memory-Plus Application Example

Sally’s breakfast this morning included one glass of orange juice (from concentrate), one slice of toast, a small bowl of bran cereal and a grapefruit. What “whole food” did Sally eat for breakfast?

a. orange juice
b. toast
c. bran cereal
d. grapefruit

Memory-Plus Application Example

Which one of the following best illustrates the law of diminishing returns?

a. The demand for a farm product increased faster than the supply of the product.
b. The population of a country increased faster than the means of subsistence.
c. A machine decreased in utility as its parts became worn.
d. A factory doubled its labor force and increased production by 50 percent.

Ability to Interpret Cause-and-Effect Relationships Example

Why does investing money in common stock protect against loss of assets during inflation?

a. It pays higher rates of interest during inflation.
b. It provides a steady but dependable income despite economic conditions.
c. It is protected by the Federal Reserve System.
d. It increases in value as the value of a business increases.

Ability to Justify Methods and Procedures Example

Why is adequate lighting necessary in a balanced aquarium?

a. Fish need light to see their food.
b. Fish take in oxygen in the dark.
c. Plants expel carbon dioxide in the dark.
d. Plants grow too rapidly in the dark.
3. Emphasize Higher-Level Thinking (continued)

Faculty Comment:

“I had previously thought that these higher-level questions would require a lot more work than they do. I also enjoy being more creative as I cast the topic into a unique setting that requires my students not only to recall but also to apply concepts. However, what has surprised me most is how much more my students ‘enjoy’ higher-level assessment questions than recall questions. ”

4. Keep Option Lengths Similar

- Avoid making your correct answer the long or short answer

5. Balance the Placement of the Correct Answer

- Correct answers are usually the second and third option

6. Be Grammatically Correct

- Use simple, precise and unambiguous wording
- Students will be more likely to select the correct answer by finding the grammatically correct option

7. Avoid Clues to the Correct Answer

- Avoid answering one question in the test by giving the answer somewhere else in the test
- Have the test reviewed by someone who can find mistakes, clues, grammar and punctuation problems before you administer the exam to students
- Avoid extremes – never, always, only
- Avoid nonsense words and unreasonable statements

8. Avoid Negative Questions

- 31 of 35 testing experts recommend avoiding negative questions
- Students may be able to find an incorrect answer without knowing the correct answer
9. **Use Only One Correct Option (Or be sure the best option is clearly the best option)**
   - The item should include one and only one correct or clearly best answer
   - With one correct answer, alternatives should be mutually exclusive and not overlapping
   - Using MC with questions containing more than one right answer lowers discrimination between students

10. **Give Clear Instructions**
    
    Such as:
    
    Questions 1 - 10 are multiple-choice questions designed to assess your ability to remember or recall basic and foundational pieces of knowledge related to this course. Please read each question carefully before reading the answer options. When you have a clear idea of the question, find your answer and mark your selection on the answer sheet. Please do not make any marks on this exam.
    
    Questions 11 – 20 are multiple-choice questions designed to assess your ability to think critically about the subject. Please read each question carefully before reading the answer options. Be aware that some questions may seem to have more than one right answer, but you are to look for the one that makes the most sense and is the most correct. When you have a clear idea of the question, find your answer and mark your selection on the answer sheet. You may justify any answer you choose by writing your justification on the blank paper provided.

11. **Use Only a Single, Clearly-Defined Problem and Include the Main Idea in the Question**
    
    - Students must know what the problem is without having to read the response options

12. **Avoid the “All the Above” Option**
    
    - Students merely need to recognize two correct options to get the answer correct

13. **Avoid the “None of the Above” Option**
    
    - You will never know if students know the correct answer

14. **Don’t Use MC Questions When Other Item Types Are More Appropriate**
    
    - limited distractors or assessing problem-solving and creativity