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## Synopsis

### Clarissa pp. 3-14

The novel opens with Clarissa Dalloway, a fifty-two year old upper-class British woman, declaring that she will buy the flowers for her party herself, as servants and workmen make preparations. It is mid-June 1923. She runs into Hugh Whitbread, an old friend, on the way to the shop. His wife suffers from an undisclosed illness. On Bond Street, she pauses at the window of a glove shop and is then greeted by Miss Pym at the flower shop. As she chooses flowers, a car backfires. Rumors circulate that the car carries the Prince of Wales, the Queen, or the Prime Minister.

### Septimus pp. 14-28

Septimus Warren Smith, a veteran of World War I who suffers from shell shock, and Lucrezia Warren Smith, his young Italian wife, also hear the car backfire. Septimus has previously threatened suicide. Lucrezia guides him to Regent's Park. A skywriting airplane appears. Various people try to decipher its message, which may or may not be TOFFEE. Septimus and Lucrezia takes seats under a tree, and Lucrezia, acting at Dr. Holmes' suggestion, tried to interest Septimus in external objects and events. Maisie Johnson, a girl from Edinburgh, passes them.

### Clarissa pp. 29-30

Clarissa returns home and is informed that her husband will be lunching with Lady Bruton. Clarissa is not invited. She goes upstairs to her

small room and selects the dress she will wear at the party, which needs mended. In the drawing room, where she mends her dress, Lucy, the maid, is putting out silver. Clarissa declines her help mending the dress.

### Clarissa and Peter pp. 40-48

Peter Walsh, an old friend who recently returned from India, arrives for a surprise visit. He habitually plays with his pocketknife. They talk about her marriage to Richard Dalloway, her father, his love for a married woman, and his reason for returning to London. He begins to ask her if Richard makes her happy but is interrupted by the arrival of Elizabeth, Clarissa's daughter. He leaves after being invited to the party.

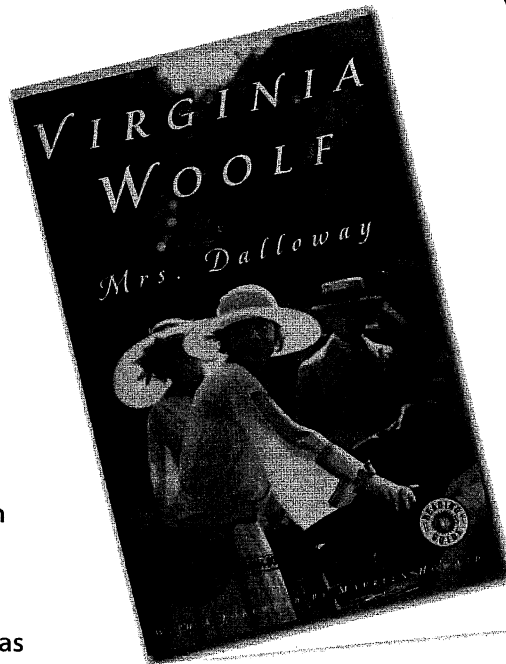
### Peter pp. 48-65

Leaving the Dalloway house, Peter is passed by a group of military boys. He spots a woman crossing Trafalgar Square. He stalks her across Piccadilly and up Regent Street, across Oxford Street and Great Portland streets. He

abruptly abandons his pursuit and walks to Regent's Park, where he smokes a cigar. Peter sits next to an elderly nurse and falls asleep. He wakes, saying to himself "The death of the soul" and laughs when little Elise Mitchell runs into a woman's legs.

### Septimus and Lucrezia pp. 65-102

Lucrezia also sees Elise's accident. She returns to Septimus under the tree because it is time for his appointment with Sir William Bradshaw. Septimus hallucinates Evans, a friend who was killed in the war, and Lucrezia exclaims, "But I am so unhappy."



Peter watches them argue. Passing an old woman singing outside the tube station, whom Peter also encounters, Septimus and Lucrezia walk to the offices of Sir William Bradshaw, an extremely successful psychologist and self-made man. He asks about Dr. Holmes' treatment and disapproves, then questions Lucrezia alone. When she admits that Septimus has threatened suicide, Sir William recommends a long period of bed rest at one of his homes in the country.

**Hugh Whitbread, Lady Bruton, and Richard Dalloway**  
pp. 102-117

Hugh stands examining socks and shoes in a shop window. He is extremely well-dressed. He arrives for lunch at Lady Bruton's shortly before Richard Dalloway. Over lunch, Lady Bruton asks about Clarissa and informs the two that Peter is back in London. Afterwards, they help her write a letter to the *Times*, the reason she has asked them to lunch. As they depart, Hugh spots a Spanish necklace in a shop window that Evelyn might like. They enter the shop, but Hugh refuses to buy anything because Mr. Dubonnet, who evidently possesses some crucial bit of knowledge, is not in. Richard buys flowers for Clarissa and goes home.

**Clarissa** pp. 117-127

Richard finds Clarissa in the drawing room and presents the flowers to her. They talk about Elizabeth and her relationship with her history tutor, Miss Kilman, whom neither of them like and who hates them. He leaves for a committee meeting, and Clarissa lies on the couch for an afternoon rest. Elizabeth disturbs her mother to tell her that she is going shopping with Miss Kilman. Clarissa gets up to greet her.

**Elizabeth and Miss Kilman** pp. 128-139

At the store, Miss Kilman buys a petticoat and they have tea. She eats greedily. Eventually Elizabeth escapes her and Miss Kilman goes to pray at Westminster Abbey. Elizabeth takes an omnibus home.

**Septimus and Lucrezia** pp. 139-151

Lucrezia works on a hat for an acquaintance. The activity momentarily jars Septimus into lucidity

and he becomes engaged and animated. He proposes an arrangement for the hat. They laugh and are briefly happy. Dr. Holmes arrives. Lucrezia refuses him entry, but he pushes past her. Septimus throws himself out the window onto a railing. Dr. Holmes declares the act cowardly and gives Lucrezia a tranquilizer as paramedics carry away the mangled corpse.

**Peter** pp. 151-165

Peter hears the ambulance as he stands near the British Museum. He returns to his hotel, where he receives a letter from Clarissa, which she must have written and posted right after he left her house. While he dines, he decides to go to her party. On the steps of her house, he plays with his pocketknife.

**The Party** pp. 165-194

Servants rush around making last minute preparations. They have received word that the Prime Minister will be attending the party. Some guests, having dined at the Dalloways', retire upstairs, while more arrive. Sally Seton, an old friend, is announced as Lady Rosseter. Clarissa greets her, but the Prime Minister's arrival interrupts their reunion. Clarissa promises to talk with Peter and Sally after the party, once the other guests have left. Clarissa floats around the party, briefly chatting with various guests. Sir William speaks of Septimus' suicide. Peter and Sally chat, reminiscing about time they spent at Clarissa's childhood home. The novel ends when Clarissa appears.

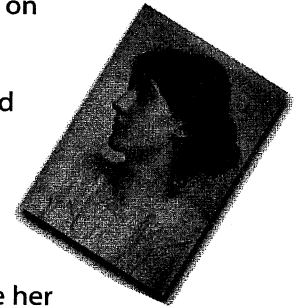
## Virginia Woolf Timeline

- 1882** born Adeline Virginia Stephen in London
- 1895** Julia Stephen, her mother, dies; suffers first mental breakdown
- 1902** Leslie Stephen, her father, knighted; rise of European feminist movements
- 1904** Leslie Stephen dies; second mental breakdown
- 1906** The Stephens travel to Greece where her brother Thoby becomes sick and dies of Typhoid fever
- 1907** Vanessa, her sister, marries critic Clive Bell; Virginia rooms with Adrian, her brother.
- 1908** E.M. Forster, *A Room with a View*
- 1912** marries Leonard Woolf; third mental breakdown which lasts three years
- 1913** D. H. Lawrence, *Sons and Lovers*
- 1914** WW I begins
- 1915** 1st novel, *The Voyage Out*
- 1917** Co-founded Hogarth Press, which will eventually publish T.S. Eliot, Katherine Mansfield, Feud, and Virginia's own work
- 1918** WW I ends; suffrage granted to British women; Wilfred Owen, "Dulce et Decorum Est"
- 1919** *Night and Day*; the Treaty of Versailles
- 1921** *Monday or Tuesday*
- 1922** *Jacob's Room*; Fascist Benito Mussolini takes power in Italy; USSR formed under Vladimir Lenin; T.S. Eliot, "The Waste Land"; James Joyce, *Ulysses*
- 1925** *Mrs. Dalloway*; *The Common Reader*
- 1927** *To the Lighthouse*; Joseph Stalin assumes power in Russia
- 1928** *Orlando*; Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*
- 1929** *A Room of One's Own*
- 1929-1939** worldwide economic depression
- 1931** *The Waves*; Gandhi leads the Salt March in India
- 1932** *The Common Reader: Second Series*
- 1933** Adolph Hitler becomes Chancellor of Germany
- 1936-1938** Spanish Civil War
- 1936-1939** height of Stalin's purges; million die
- 1937** *The Years*; nephew Julian Bell killed in the Spanish Civil War
- 1938** *Three Guineas*

- 1939** WW II begins; the Woolfs prepare to commit suicide if England is invaded
- 1940** *Roger Fry: A Biography*; London home destroyed in the Battle of Britain
- 1941** drowns herself in the River Ouse
- 1960** Leonard Woolf dies

## Author Sketch

Virginia Woolf was born Adeline Virginia Stephen in London on January 25, 1881. She was allowed free access to her father's extensive library and determined at a young age to become a writer. Her mother died unexpectedly in 1895, triggering the first of the mental breakdowns which would trouble her throughout her life. The siblings moved from Hyde Park Gate to Bloomsbury following the death of their father in 1904 and Virginia's subsequent breakdown. There she became a core member of the Bloomsbury Group.



Beginning in 1905, she wrote for the *Times Literary Supplement*. In 1912 she met Leonard Woolf, who was on leave from the Ceylon Civil Service. They were married on August 10, 1912 following a brief engagement and decided to make money by writing. Virginia suffered a severe breakdown shortly after the marriage. Her first book, *The Voyage Out*, was published in 1915. Two years later they bought a small printing press as a therapeutic hobby for Virginia. They started Hogarth Press and increasingly became publishers rather than printers. After 1921 Virginia published almost exclusively on Hogarth.

Virginia established her reputation as a central modernist novelist with the 1927 publication of *To the Lighthouse*, followed by *The Waves* in 1931. The 1930s were difficult for the Woolfs, shadowed by the deaths of friends and the prospect of another war. Anticipating another breakdown, Virginia loaded her pockets with stones and drowned herself in the River Ouse near their Sussex home on March 28, 1941.

## Critic's Corner

*Mrs. Dalloway*, one of the most influential twentieth century novels, is taught in high schools and universities under such diverse rubrics as modernist fiction, post/colonial fiction, and feminist fiction. Considered experimental at the time of publication, its stream of consciousness and compression of time stretch the limits of language. The novel flits between present and past, external events and internal states, sights and sounds, thoughts and memories. It reads as the literary equivalent of earth twentieth century phenomenology, investigating the movements of the mind.

The multiplicity of perspectives fractures the narrative through each character's specific viewpoint and inclinations. In the absence of a single, controlling authorial voice, these perspectives exist side by side. Each enjoys equal weight. At the literary level, this was a departure from the traditional omniscient third person narrator. Thematically, the absence of a dominant voice reads as a critique of the power structures of Woolf's time, allowing for post-colonial and feminist readings.

Woolf's characters move through post-war London bemused by memory, contemplating middle-age, the course of their lives, and the inevitability of death. Their reveries, moments of despair, decisions and reversals circle similar tracts but never allow a definitive answer to the questions they pose themselves. In the absence of a commanding authorial presence, the reader becomes yet another consciousness approaching the same topics from a particular vantage.

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Smith, Patricia Juliana. *Lesbian Panic: Homoeroticism in Modern British Women's Fiction*. New York: Columbia UP, 1997.

## Selected Other Works by the Author

### Essays

*The Common Reader*, 1925

*A Room of One's Own*, 1929

*The Second Common Reader*, 1932

*Three Guineas*, 1938

*The Death of the Moth and Other Essays*, 1942

*The Moment and Other Essays*, 1947

*The Captain's Death Bed and Other Essays*, 1950

*Granite and Rainbow: Essays*, 1958

### Novels

*The Voyage Out*, 1915

*Night and Day*, 1919

*Jacob's Room*, 1922

*To the Lighthouse*, 1927

*Orlando*, 1928

*The Waves*, 1931

*Flush*, 1933

*The Years*, 1937

*Between the Acts*, 1941

### Stories

*Monday or Tuesday*, 1921

*A Haunted House and Other Short Stories*, 1944

## Media Versions

### Audiocassette

*Mrs. Dalloway* (unabridged), Recorded Books, 2003

### DVD

*Mrs. Dalloway*, Fox Lorber, 1998

### Download

*Mrs. Dalloway*, .pdf or Microsoft Reader, Rosettabooks, 2002

### Large Print

*Mrs. Dalloway*, G K Hall & Co., 1996

## General Objectives

1. To read a modernist novel
2. To navigate difficult prose
3. To follow implied action
4. To comment on attitudes towards aging, death, and life
5. To characterize the relationship between external events and internal reactions
6. To understand ways in which language mimics thought
7. To investigate conflicting perspectives
8. To understand and use literary terminology
9. To explain the effects of World War I on British society
10. To evaluate rationalist, patriarchal, and colonial power structures

## Specific Objectives

1. To explain Peter's feelings for Clarissa
2. To compare/contrast Septimus with Clarissa
3. To analyze the novel's stream of consciousness prose
4. To differentiate between the internal and external events
5. To characterize the tone of the times in London
6. To comment on the multiplicity of perspectives
7. To identify recurring objects, places, and events
8. To investigate the relationship between Clarissa and Sally
9. To discuss the novel's depiction of aging
10. To account for Septimus' suicide

## Literary Terms and Application

**Intertextuality** the relation between a text and others. This includes conscious, unconscious, and incidental references and similarities. The frequent references to Shakespeare in *Mrs. Dalloway* constitutes deliberate intertextuality. Stylistically, the novel is related to James Joyce's *Ulysses*.

**Point of View** the perspective form which a narrative is told. *Mrs. Dalloway* shifts frequently between points of view that often disagree. This multiplicity destabilizes the notion of absolute

## Mrs. Dalloway Virginia Woolf

truth in the novel, since there is neither a unifying nor authoritative perspective.

**Stream of Consciousness** a narrative mode that attempts to represent the full spectrum of characters' inner life, including thoughts, feelings, memories, associations, sensations, and perceptions. It often mimics thought by leaping laterally from object to object. William James coined the term in 1890. *Mrs. Dalloway* uses stream of consciousness to narrate the thoughts and feelings of the characters and to highlight their different perspectives.

### The Importance of Setting

*Mrs. Dalloway* is set in twentieth century London. Her beau returns from India, much of which was a British colony until 1947, when India and Pakistan became self-governing, after a successful effort to win independence by non-violent resistance, led foremost by Mahatma Gandhi. The British East India Company was dissolved and became the secular nation of India, while Pakistan was established as a Muslim nation. India later absorbed the territories of Goa, a former Portugese colony relinquished in 1961, and Pondicherry, which was ceded by the French in 1954. India held its first general elections in 1952, making it the world's largest democracy.

### Cross-Curricular Sources

#### DVD and Video

*All Quiet on the Western Front*, Universal, 1930  
*All Quiet on the Western Front*, Avid Home Entertainment, 1979  
*The Hours*, Paramount, 2003  
*Howard's End*, Image Entertainment, 1992  
*Lawrence of Arabia*, Columbia, 1962  
*Orlando*, Columbia, 1993  
*Othello*, Castle Rock, 1995  
*Paths of Glory*, MGM, 1957  
*To the Lighthouse*, Monterey Home Video, 1983

#### Internet

English Teaching Online  
<http://www.teachit.co.uk/index.asp?links=1>

#### Shell Shock

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/war/wwone/shellshock\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/war/wwone/shellshock_01.shtml)

#### University of Adelaide Library

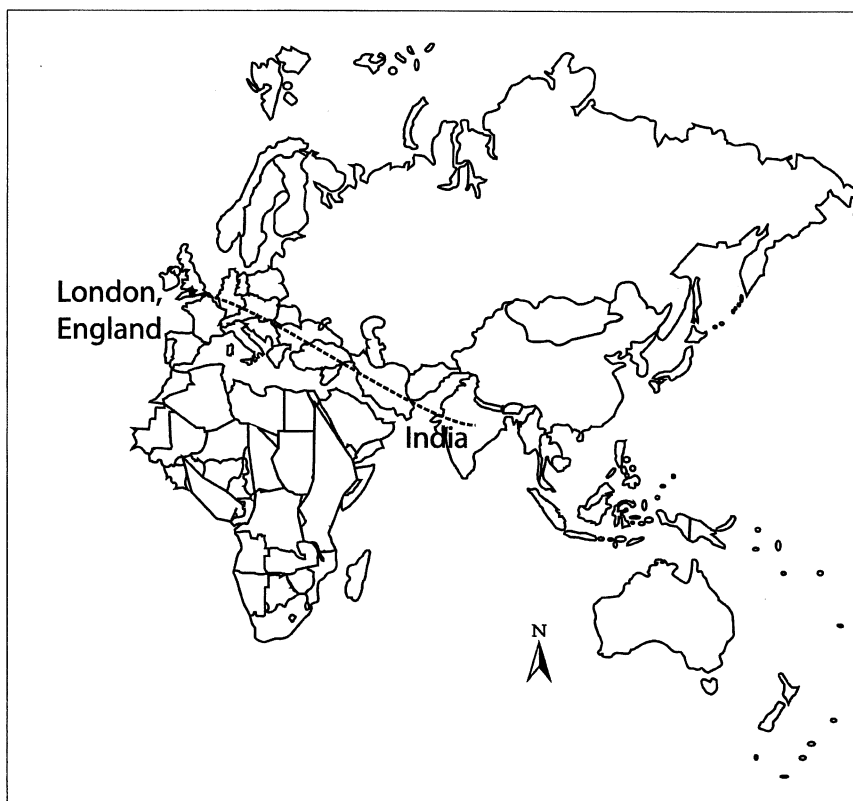
(online copies of Virginia Woolf's works)  
<http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/>

#### Novels

Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*  
Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*  
E.M. Forster, *A Passage to India*  
Amitav Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines*  
James Joyce, *Ulysses*  
Rudyard Kipling, *Kim*  
D.H. Lawrence, *Women in Love*  
Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook*  
Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things*  
Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons*

#### Poetry

T.S. Eliot, "The Waste Land"  
Wilfred Owen, "Dulce et Decorum Est"  
Ezra Pound, *The Cantos*  
Siegfried Sassoon, "To His Dead Body," "The Rear



Guard, "Dreamers"

W.B. Yeats, "The Second Coming"

**Reference**

*Encyclopedia of Feminist Literature*, Greenwood Press

*Encyclopedia of Postcolonial Studies*, Greenwood Press

Stanley Wolpert, *India*, U of California Press

**Theory**

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*

Edward Said, *Orientalism*

**Themes and Motifs**

**Themes**

- fear of death
- perspective
- aging
- marriage
- memory
- success vs. failure
- disillusionment
- colonization
- disenfranchisement
- female sexuality
- social conventions
- mental illness

**Motifs**

- differing perspectives on an event or place
- Shakespearean references
- recurring objects, places, events, and sounds
- unhappy marriages/relationships
- inability to communicate thoughts/feelings
- the force of memory upon the present
- rebelling against and conforming to social expectations
- retrospectively evaluating one's life
- contemplating the inevitability of death
- questioning the meaning(lessness) of life

**Meaning Study**

Below are significant lines from the novel. Explain each in context. Page-numbers pinpoint each entry so that you can re-read the passage in which it appears.

1. old Mrs. Hilbery, stretching her hands to the blaze of his laughter (about the Duke and the Lady), which, as she heard it across the room, seemed to reassure her on a point which sometimes bothered her if she woke early in the morning and did not like to call her maid for a cup of tea; how it is certain we must die. (p. 171)

*(At her party, Clarissa hears a man laughing and is reassured of her mortality. The scene of an elderly lady "stretching her hands to the blaze of his laughter" presents mortality in the presence of vitality. The word "blaze" invokes heat, which by extension presents aging as a loss of warmth. Structurally, the sentence creates poignancy. It flows through sights, people, sounds, thoughts and then ends on the final clipped pronouncement "it is certain we must die," which echoes back through the sentence and includes everyone present. At the heart of the party, in the midst of laughter and brandy, mortality remains inescapable.)*

2. it might be possible that the world itself is without meaning. (p. 86)  
*(Upon his return to England, Septimus looks out the window of a train and reflects upon the meaningless of the world. The context of the thought is as important as its content. Sitting on a train, the English countryside scrolls by; the world that may be without meaning is specifically England. This thought is indicative of Septimus' burgeoning disenchantment with the country he served in the first World War. Shortly after, he finds his love of Shakespeare, who had represented to him England in general, had "shriveled utterly." Septimus' disenchantment is echoed by a number of characters and is indicative of a general ennui in the post-war London of Mrs. Dalloway. The scene, set before the day of the novel, also highlights Septimus' slide into insanity. On the train, still sane, he contemplates the meaninglessness of the world. In the park, at the height of his insanity, he contemplates the meaningfulness of the world, interprets everything around him as a special message.)*

3. But this question of love ... this falling in love with women. Take Sally Seton .... Had not that, after all, been love? (p. 32)  
*(Clarissa, returning home from shopping, recalls her relationship with Sally Seton. Sally had presented alternatives to a naïve Clarissa. She smoked, broke rules, acted unconventionally. Their romantic involvement disrupted the traditional love triangle between Clarissa, Richard Dalloway, and Peter Walsh. Generally, Sally represents a distinctly feminine freedom. Their subsequent marriages are presented as a diminishing of the possibilities they enjoyed in their youth.)*
4. Life is made intolerable; they make life intolerable, men like that (p. 180)  
*(Having heard of Septimus' suicide at her party, Clarissa ponders his reasons. She dislikes Sir William Bradshaw and wonders if Septimus thought that men like that made life intolerable. Sir William Bradshaw represents power in the novel. He is authoritative and certain. In many ways, he is the antithesis of the novel's driving principle. In a narrative of shifting, multiple perspectives, he represents the idea of a single, controlling viewpoint. The structure of the sentence emphasizes Septimus' powerlessness. "Life is made intolerable" is passive. The passive voice makes Life something that is acted upon. It also presents the possibility of Life being other than intolerable. "Life is intolerable" would make being intolerable the natural state of life. "Life is made intolerable" presents Sir William and others like him as oppressors.)*
5. she always had the feeling that it was very, very dangerous to live even one day. (p. 8)  
*(Walking through London on the way to get flowers for the party, Clarissa becomes intoxicated by the sights and sounds around her. She feels split, both young and old, both intensely engaged with her surroundings and distantly voyeuristic. The split emphasizes the novel's theme of privacy, of the contrast between one's internal and external lives.)*
6. For the worthlessness of this life did strike Richard pretty forcibly (p. 111)  
*(After helping Lady Burton write a letter to the Times, Richard Dalloway and Hugh Whitbread stop in a shop because Hugh spots a necklace*

*that his wife might like. Richard, who is thought to be simple by the other characters, descends for a moment into introspection. The buying of necklaces suddenly seems to him trivial, but since his life consists of similar events, life in general suddenly seems trivial. The despair lasts only a moment; he quickly thinks of his daughter, whom he adores, and then Clarissa. Realizing his love for Clarissa, he resolves to buy her flowers and tell her that he loves her, which he ultimately fails to do.)*

7. What she liked was simply life. (p. 118)  
*(Clarissa feels criticized for her love of parties. She thinks that Peter Walsh considers her a snob, that she enjoys imposing herself on others and surrounding herself with important personalities. Richard, she thinks, considers it silly and childish. Lying on the couch, she thinks about why she throws parties and decides that it is because she enjoys life. Her parties are offerings for their own sake. She likes life and wishes to live fully.)*
8. Having done things millions of times enriched them, though it might be said to take the surface off. (p. 159)  
*(Preparing to go to Clarissa's party, Peter reflects on habit and repetition. He thinks that repeated behavior imbues it with personal history and meaning, although the joy of newness is lost. This moment is one of many in the novel where characters reflect on the process of aging.)*
9. possibly she said to herself ... As we are a doomed race, chained to a sinking ship ... as the whole thing is a bad joke, let us, at any rate, do our part; mitigate the sufferings of our fellow-prisoners ... decorate the dungeon with flowers and air-cushions; be as decent as we possible can. (p. 76)  
*(Peter wonders why Clarissa throws her parties and considers the possibility that it is a gesture in the face of a cold, meaningless life. This passage contrasts sharply with Clarissa's perception of Peter's opinion of her parties. She thinks that he thinks them frivolous and shallow. In keeping with the themes of multiple perspectives and miscommunication, Peter's opinion of her parties is close to Clarissa's, but they mistake one another's opinions.)*



10. It was all over for her. The sheet stretched and the bed narrow. (p. 46)  
*(While visiting with Peter, Clarissa has a moment of despair. She briefly wishes she had married him and that, having missed her opportunity, that her life is barren. The bed refers to the narrow bed in which she sleeps alone. Generally, her marriage to Richard is portrayed as a defeat. Clarissa abandoned the opportunities implicit in Sally and Peter for the security of Richard's personality and financial situation. This moment, like others, passes. Clarissa's opinions fluctuate throughout the novel, as do every other character's. The internal life presented in Mrs. Dalloway is shifting and inconstant, often at the mercy of external events, which elicit momentary responses.)*

## Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers with quotations from the novel.

### Character

- Describe the young Sally Seton.  
*(As a young woman, Sally Seton is the archetype of rebellious youth. She breaks rules, flouts convention, violates taboos, and introduces an element of chaos to her surroundings. As a female character, she undermines patriarchal limitations on women's experience. She argues with Hugh Whitbread about women's suffrage. She celebrates her physicality, running naked in the halls. She appropriates symbols of power. Her smoking cigars is both an appropriation of a traditionally male activity and a displaced appropriation of the phallus. Her suggested affair with Clarissa suggests an independent female sexuality.)*

### Style

- How does the shifting perspective frame the novel's events?  
*(The shifts between points of view fragment the world of Mrs. Dalloway into multiple perspectives. There is no one authoritative, controlling point of view. This multiplicity undermines the possibility of certainty. Events are viewed and remembered differently by the characters, leav-*

*ing phenomena open to interpretation. How the characters interpret events becomes more important than the events themselves. The events serve as springboards for thoughts and feelings. The effects on the characters are real and provide telling information about the person, while the event itself recedes behind the multiple perspectives. It is unclear whether Hugh Whitbread actually kissed Sally Seton, but Sally's claim that he did, and Clarissa's thoughts/feelings about the claim are definite and important. The lack of certainty also provides the basis for a critique of the rationalist metaphysic underlying the novel's colonial and patriarchal power structures.)*

### Character Development

- Discuss the importance of Clarissa's relationship with Sally.  
*(The relationship between Clarissa and Sally serves to forefront the novel's theme of aging and to critique social conventions and compulsive heterosexuality. At the basic level, Sally opens possibilities to Clarissa which are then closed. Sally is impulsive, irreverent, and non-conformist. The implied love affair between them is an extension of Sally's broadened horizons. That they both marry, become conventional, and fall out of touch with one another indicates that social convention is an imperative, unavoidable and crushing. Their marriages are portrayed as diminishing.)*

### Action

- Analyze the proportion of internal to external events and its significance.  
*(Very little actually occurs in the day described in the novel, and much of what does occur is seemingly trivial. The one tragic event, Septimus' suicide, occurs outside the domain of the other characters, echoing only through overheard sirens and Sir William's conversation. The vast majority of Mrs. Dalloway is concerned with the inner life: thoughts, memories, feelings, associations. Quotidian events like shopping, lunches, and parties give way to reflections on such topics as aging, death, and happiness.)*

### Conflict

- In what ways do the internal and external events conflict?

*(The characters' internal and external lives conflict in two major ways. The first, the disjunction between concrete reality and the multiplicity of perspectives, is addressed in question #2. The second conflict manifests as a breakdown of communication. The characters' rich internal lives translate into dull, broken conversations. Richard Dalloway buys Clarissa flowers and intends to tell her that he loves her, but succeeds only in discussing Miss Kilman and his upcoming committee. The visit between Peter and Clarissa, charged internally, results in a flat, stifled conversation. Septimus is tortured by intense, complicated hallucinations and revelations, but succeeds only in expressing garbled fragments, even in writing.)*

**Interpretation**

6. What is the function of Big Ben's repeated tolling throughout the novel?  
*(The tolling of Big Ben and other clocks performs a number of functions. First, it creates a literal space. The events of the novel all occur within a physical space delineated by the radius of Big Ben's tolling. It ties the characters together. It also remains the single absolute. Other events fold into multiple interpretations, but the tolling of Big Ben remains singular. Time remains absolute, inescapable. Thematically, the tolling of clocks reinforces the novel's preoccupation with aging and memory. It also provides some measure of structure to otherwise unstructured prose.)*

**Atmosphere**

7. Describe the atmosphere of the novel's London.  
*(The London of Mrs. Dalloway is at the verge of a radical change. Remnants of an older England remain. Shakespeare recurs throughout the novel, as does Big Ben. The commotion surrounding the motor car which may or may not be transporting the Queen or the Prime Minister retains a sense of national pride. However, there is a general sense of post-war disenchantment. Septimus' character represents the far end of the spectrum, but a general sense of diminishment imbues the novel. There are doubts concerning the Empire. The airplane, which should inspire awe or pride, elicits only confusion as to its message. In many ways,*

*London mirrors the characters: middle-aged and in decline.)*

**Motivation**

8. Why did Clarissa marry Richard Dalloway instead of Peter Walsh?  
*(Clarissa married Richard because it was a sensible thing to do. She chose the security of an upper class life over Peter's penchant for adventure. She also chose to retain some part of herself separate from her husband. Peter demanded that they share everything, but Clarissa preferred to keep some part of herself private.)*

**Author Method**

9. How does Woolf's stream of consciousness imitate real cognitive processes?  
*(Woolf's stream of consciousness mimics the lateral leaps of the mind. They are generally associative. An external object or event may trigger an associated memory or thought. The internal events themselves also act as triggers; a thought may shift to a related memory or feeling. The grammatical and mechanical characteristics of the novel also mimic thought. The sentence structure, generally very long chains occasionally interrupted by staccato realizations, reproduces the seamless flow of internal life. The links between thoughts are almost entirely lateral. Thoughts, feelings, and memories are generally linked by semicolons. The semicolons act as a non-judgmental "and then." In contrast, there are very few subordinate clauses linked by such linear words as "because." The thoughts and feelings all carry the same weight; they are simply set side by side. The parenthetical insertions often act as afterthoughts.)*

**Unity**

10. How does Septimus unify the novel?  
*(Septimus literally unifies the novel by providing a link between the characters' disparate experiences during the day. From the periphery, he experiences common events like the car's backfire, the plane's skywriting, the woman singing outside the tube, and Big Ben's tolling. He is also seen by a number of other characters in the novel, and his suicide reverberates through various situations. Peter Walsh hears the ambulance; Clarissa Dalloway hears it discussed at her party.)*

*Conceptually, Septimus serves to explain the general ennui of the novel. He is an extreme example of the disenchantment felt by the characters, and his war time experiences explain both his own feelings and the general tone of his contemporary London. Septimus is also a negative image of Clarissa. He is middle-class, serious, insane, masculine, and chooses his death. Clarissa is upper class, frivolous, sane, feminine, and chooses to continue living, despite being plagued by an ennui similar to Septimus!)*

## How Language Works

1. Woolf's doubts about British colonial practices emerges in her discussion of Conversion, a concept related to Sir William Bradshaw's Proportion: "she feasts on the wills of the weakly, loving to impress, impose, adoring her own features stamped on the face of the populace."
2. Clarissa's love of life is demonstrated by her reaction to Septimus' suicide: "The young man had killed himself; but she did not pity him ... with all this going on." Immersed in her party, in living in general, Clarissa cannot pity his despair.
3. Peter's feelings for Clarissa cement themselves in the final lines of the novel: "What is this terror? what is this ecstasy? he thought to himself. What is it that fills me with extraordinary excitement? It is Clarissa, he said." The move from "he thought" to "he said" also emphasizes the gulf between his internal and external lives.
4. Looking at the skywriting airplane, Septimus mistakes its intent: "So, thought Septimus, looking up, they are signaling to me." The scene allows the reader to experience Septimus' mental illness without being told that he is insane by an authorial insertion. It also emphasizes the multiplicity of perspectives. People around him think the words spell TOFFEE or KEY, and Septimus assumes that it is a private message.
5. Clarissa remembers her relationship with Sally: "the charm was overpowering, to her at least, so that she could remember standing in her bedroom at the top of the house holding the hot-water can in her hands and saying aloud,

'She is beneath this roof ...'" This memory is striking because the intensity of feeling for Sally exceeds Clarissa's feelings for either Richard, whom she married, or Peter, whom she might have married.

6. Miss Kilman's contempt for the upper class is largely directed at Clarissa: "she should have been in a factory; behind a counter; Mrs. Dalloway and all the other fine ladies!" It is interesting to note that, although Miss Kilman is not a sympathetic character, her ideas are explicable in light of the personal history Woolf provides.

## Across the Curriculum

### Drama

1. Gathering details from both Clarissa and Peter's memories, script and act out the scene in which she breaks with him romantically.
2. In a group, assign characters to students and act out improvisational situations among the group. Using what you know about the character, act out the situation as you think the character would.

### Psychology

1. Make a web site about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder as a result of combat experience, also called shell shock, combat stress, and war neurosis. Include its history in the twentieth century, its evolution as a recognizable psychological disorder, symptoms and treatments.
2. Make an oral report comparing the novel's treatment of memory with current psychological models of how memory works. Is the novel psychologically realistic? What stylistic elements correspond to processes of memory?

### Gender Studies

1. Analyze each character in relation to gender stereotypes. Are they portrayed as stereotypically masculine or feminine. Do any of the characters act in a manner not commonly associated with their biological gender?
2. Make a timeline of the British women's rights movement. Include key activists, events, laws, demonstrations, politicians, writers, artists, and professionals.

**Economics**

1. Translate the sums mentioned in the novel into contemporary dollars. For example, Sally Seton says "I have ten thousand [pounds] a year." In contemporary terms, what level of income does this constitute?
2. Make an oral report on the effects of World War I on the British economy.

**Art**

1. Using desktop publishing or other media, design murals or posters contrasting characters' perspectives on common thoughts, events, or people. Examples include: Lucrezia and Sir William on Septimus, Clarissa and Peter on Sally's claim that Hugh kissed her, Septimus and Clarissa on death, Peter and Richard on Clarissa's party, etc.
2. Draw portraits of how you imagine the main characters. Using references to the book, explain your choices.
3. Sketch drawings of what you consider to be the most significant moments of the novel. Indicate the significance of each drawing in its title. Present and discuss the drawings in class.
4. Make an illustrated guide of the objects that recur throughout the novel and how they are viewed by different characters. Include: clocks, Big Ben, Sir William's car, Peter's pocket knife, the Dalloway's house, the sky writing airplane, Clarissa's green dress, the letter to the *Times*, etc.

**Cinema**

1. Watch the film version of *Mrs. Dalloway*. Make note of deviations from the original script and discuss possible reasons for them.
2. Watch a five minute clip from a movie (any movie). Select one object from the scene and write about it from all of the perspectives of every character in the scene.

**Language**

1. Analyze and list the novel's major stylistic characteristics. Include notes on sentence structures and length, word choice, structure, breaks, shifts in perspective, and dialogue.

2. List and provide examples of different uses of parentheses in the novel. What functions do the parenthetical insertions perform? How is the text inside the parentheses different from the rest of the novel?

**Journalism**

1. Stage an interview with Hugh, Richard, Clarissa, Peter, and Sally about their youth. Include questions about their personal relationships, how they've changed, their views on Clarissa's father, and their fondest memories.
2. Write a newspaper article about the death of Septimus. Include cause, place, and time of death, and a short biographic note.
3. Write a review of *Mrs. Dalloway*. Include a short synopsis, a brief author bio, comments on the book's subsequent influence, and a summary judgment on the its literary merit.

**Geography**

1. Using a map of London and pins color coded to represent each character, chart the novel's progress through the city. Is there a pattern? Which places recur throughout the novel?
2. Make a annotated map of the British Empire. Note when colonies entered and left the empire. Using shading, mark the status of the empire at the time of the novel, mid-June 1923.

**Social Studies**

1. Give an oral report on the effects of World War I on literary and artistic production. Include recurring themes, movements, major writers, artists, and works, and a timeline.
2. Create a website detailing British colonialism. Include links to pages about each colony, its role and history in the empire, commentary on how the World Wars changed colonial practice, and the lasting effects of British colonial practices on the globe.

**Composition**

1. Compose a short story in as close an approximation of Virginia Woolf's style as possible. Include such features as stream of consciousness, shifting perspectives, extended sentences, and parenthetical insertions.
2. Write one of your memories from the perspective of everyone present. How does the perspective shift perception? Is there a "right" way of viewing the event?
3. Write a poem in which you express the relationship between two of the characters from the novel from both perspectives. ex: A poem about the relationship between Sally and Clarissa from both of their perspectives.
4. Write a short story about Clarissa's party in the third person limited. What is lost in the conversion? What actual events does Woolf relate?
5. Examine how Woolf represents Septimus' mental illness and then apply her method to a story of your own. Create a character, choose a mental illness other than P.T.S.D., and apply what you have learned from Woolf.

**Literature**

1. In a chalk talk, give a short history of the Bloomsbury Group. Include: Clive Bell, Roger Fry, John Maynard Keynes, Thoby Stephen, Lytton Strachey, Leonard Woolf, Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant, Vita Sackville-West, Desmond McCarthey, Adrian Stephen, E.M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, and Saxon Sydney-Turner.
2. Make an oral report on stream of consciousness in fiction. Include Laurence Sterne, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Gertrude Stein,

William Faulkner, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and Jack Kerouac.

3. Read T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and compare its take on aging, life, and relationships with those of characters in *Mrs. Dalloway*.
4. Examine the characters of Septimus and Clarissa. In what ways are they connected? Are they in some way reverse images of one another?
5. Research and write an essay in which you discuss *Mrs. Dalloway* in the context of "the modernist novel." Is it prototypical or atypical? What is Virginia Woolf's relationship to modernism?

**Alternate Assessment**

1. Write a short story in which you depict the burgeoning romance between Daisy and Peter Walsh. Include their meeting, discussions about her husband, and her decision to become divorced, and Peter's return to England. Include details of colonial Indian life.
2. Read *To the Lighthouse* or *The Waves* by Virginia Woolf. Look for common themes and stylistic elements. Discuss your findings.
3. Read *Ulysses* by James Joyce. Does Virginia Woolf appear to have been influenced by Joyce? Cite specific similarities and differences in your discussion. In what way are both modernist novels?
4. *Mrs. Dalloway* refers to *Othello* by William Shakespeare several times. Read *Othello*. Reread the references to the play in the novel and discuss them. In what way are they appropriate to the characters and the plot? What thematic similarities exist between the two works? Are any characters from the novel similar to characters in the play?
5. *Mrs. Dalloway* takes place over the course of a day. In an analogous compression of time, write a short story that takes place over the course of an hour.

## Vocabulary Test

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. obsequious

- a) extravagant
- b) reflective
- c) expensive
- d) subservient

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. inarticulate

- a) incapable of speech
- b) difficult to chew
- c) stiff or unbendable
- d) isolated

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. stolid

- a) heavy
- b) unemotional
- c) indestructible
- d) square or cubic

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. onerous

- a) burdensome
- b) unique
- c) antisocial
- d) unpleasant to smell

\_\_\_\_\_ 5. jocund

- a) yellow in complexion
- b) from the countryside
- c) high spirited and mirthful
- d) related to horse riding

\_\_\_\_\_ 6. ponderous

- a) full of thought, pensive
- b) unwieldy due to size or weight
- c) dotted with pockets of water
- d) having alien characteristics

\_\_\_\_\_ 7. torpid

- a) nocturnal
- b) sluggish
- c) sleek
- d) viscous

\_\_\_\_\_ 8. impetuous

- a) defiant
- b) sulky
- c) stormy
- d) impulsive

\_\_\_\_\_ 9. ostensibly

- a) as if made of stone
- b) dimwittedly
- c) apparently
- d) quietly, sadly

\_\_\_\_\_ 10. interminable

- a) seemingly endless
- b) occurring in an intermission
- c) routine or mediocre
- d) subterranean

\_\_\_\_\_ 11. bilious

- a) inclined to billow
- b) ill-tempered
- c) rootless, wandering
- d) possessing bovine characteristics

\_\_\_\_\_ 12. taciturn

- a) disinclined to speech
- b) careful, cautious
- c) sensitive to others' feelings
- d) rash, violent

\_\_\_\_\_ 13. negligible

- a) small in size
- b) capable of being owned
- c) trivial, unimportant
- d) translucent

\_\_\_\_\_ 14. insolent

- a) flammable, hot-tempered
- b) regal, aristocratic
- c) rough in texture
- d) contemptuous, overbearing

\_\_\_\_\_ 15. palpitate

- a) to crush into a uniform mixture
- b) to beat rapidly
- c) to rain, snow, or sleet
- d) to fall down

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## Comprehension Test A

### Part I: Character Identification (30 Points)

Name the character who fits these descriptions.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. introduced as "Wickham"
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. plays with his pocketknife
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. kills himself
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. throws the party
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Septimus hallucinates about him
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Elizabeth's tutor
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. remembers throwing a shilling into the Serpentine River
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. from Milan
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. suggests institutionalizing Septimus
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. was once in love with Clarissa
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. ruined one of Clarissa's father's books
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. shell-shocked veteran
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. works in the government
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. recently returned from India
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. invites Richard for lunch

### Part II: Fact or Opinion (20 Points)

Mark the following statements T for true, F for false, or O for opinion.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Hugh Whitbread kissed Sally Seton in the smoking room.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The Prime Minister attends the party.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Sally Seton has five girls.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Clarissa regrets her marriage.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Peter Walsh is very successful.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Doris Kilman detests the Dalloways.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Lady Bruton is politically influential.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Clarissa is superficial.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Lucrezia made dresses with her sisters.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Hugh Whitbread buys a Spanish necklace for his wife.

**Comprehension Test A (Page 2)**

**Part III: Location/Object Identification (20 points)**

Name the place/object to which the description applies.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. rings throughout the novel
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. where Peter met his wife
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. city in which the novel's events take place
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. country where Septimus met his wife
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. where Clarissa mends her dress
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. where Septimus and his wife are seen arguing
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. perhaps advertises toffees
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. causes a commotion on Bond Street
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. where Doris Kilman takes Elizabeth
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. where Clarissa, Richard, Sally, Hugh, and Peter spent time in their youth.

**Part IV: Essay (30 points)**

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Discuss the time-frame of the novel's events.
2. Contrast Clarissa with Septimus.
3. How has Sally Seton changed?
4. Describe the novel's depiction of England as an ideal.
5. Analyze the importance of class in the novel.



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## Comprehension Test B

### Part I: Identification (30 points)

Identify the person about whom each quote is.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. he was almost too well dressed always
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. she had a narrow pea-stick figure
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. she looked so lovely in her pink frock!
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. she was like a wheel without a tyre
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. She trimmed hats for Mrs. Filmer's friends
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The dead were with him.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. in those days she was completely reckless
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. all in white, with a fox-terrier on her knee
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. poor chap, all rigged up in gold lace.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. she found it impossible to write a letter to the Times
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. A young man had killed himself.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Literally, when he came into the room he smelt of the stables.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. people thought she had married beneath her
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. She had just broken into her fifty-second year.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. that querulous, weak-kneed old man

### Part II: Short Answer (20 Points)

Provide an answer to each of these questions.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. What does Richard fail to tell Clarissa?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. What did Sally smoke in her room?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Why has Peter Walsh returned to London?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. What do Sally and Hugh fight about at Bourton?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. What activity briefly brings Septimus and Lucrezia together?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. What quality does Sir William elevate above all others?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Why was Doris Kilman dismissed from her school position?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. What illness do Richard and Sir William discuss?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. How does Elizabeth return home?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Where does Clarissa sleep?

**Comprehension Test B (Page 2)**

**Part III: Fill-in (20 points)**

Fill in the words that complete each statement.

1. Peter Walsh wanted to marry \_\_\_\_\_, but she married \_\_\_\_\_.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ is a veteran of \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The sound of \_\_\_\_\_'s \_\_\_\_\_ recurs throughout the novel.
4. Dr. Holmes represents \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Lady Bruton thinks that \_\_\_\_\_ impedes Richard's \_\_\_\_\_ advancement.

**Part IV: Essay (30 points)**

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Which events, people, places, and objects tie the characters together?
2. Describe the novel's attitude towards aging.
3. Argue that Clarissa Dalloway is or is not happy.
4. Analyze death as a theme of *Mrs. Dalloway*.
5. Discuss the representation of India in the novel.



## Answer Key

### VOCABULARY

- |      |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. D | 6. B  | 11. B |
| 2. A | 7. B  | 12. A |
| 3. B | 8. D  | 13. C |
| 4. A | 9. C  | 14. D |
| 5. C | 10. A | 15. B |

### COMPREHENSION TEST A

#### Part I: Character Identification (30 points)

1. Richard Dalloway
2. Peter Walsh
3. Septimus Warren Smith
4. Clarissa Dalloway
5. Evans
6. Doris Kilman
7. Clarissa Dalloway
8. Lucrezia Warren Smith
9. Sir William Bradshaw
10. Peter Walsh
11. Sally Seton
12. Septimus Warren Smith
13. Richard Dalloway
14. Peter Walsh
15. Lady Millicent Bruton

#### Part II: Fact or Opinion (20 Points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. O | 6. T  |
| 2. T | 7. T  |
| 3. F | 8. O  |
| 4. F | 9. F  |
| 5. F | 10. F |

#### Part III: Location/Object Identification (20 points)

- |                     |                      |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Big Ben          | 6. Regent's Park     |
| 2. ship to India    | 7. sky writing plane |
| 3. London           | 8. mysterious car    |
| 4. Italy            | 9. the Stores        |
| 5. the drawing room | 10. Bourton          |

#### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

### COMPREHENSION TEST B

#### Part I: Identification (30 points)

1. Hugh Whitbread
2. Clarissa Dalloway
3. Elizabeth Dalloway
4. Doris Kilman
5. Lucrezia Warren Smith
6. Septimus Warren Smith
7. Sally Seton
8. Daisy
9. the Prime Minister
10. Lady Millicent Bruton
11. Septimus Warren Smith
12. Richard Dalloway
13. Sally Seton
14. Clarissa Dalloway
15. Justin Parry, Clarissa's father

#### Part II: Short Answer (20 Points)

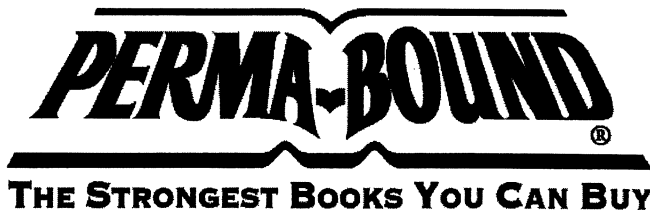
- |                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| 1. that he loves her    | 6. proportion                          |
| 2. cigars               | 7. expressing sympathy for the Germans |
| 3. to arrange a divorce | 8. shell shock                         |
| 4. women's rights       | 9. omnibus                             |
| 5. trimming a hat       | 10. a small attic room                 |

#### Part III: Fill-in (20 points)

1. Clarissa, Richard
2. Septimus, WWI
3. Big Ben, tolling
4. human nature, Septimus
5. Clarissa, political

#### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.



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