

Everybody's Protest Novel

In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, that cornerstone of American social protest fiction, St. Clare, the kindly master, remarks to his coldly disapproving Yankee cousin, Miss Ophelia, that, so far as he is able to tell, the blacks have been turned over to the devil for the benefit of the whites in this world—however, he adds thoughtfully, it may turn out in the next. Miss Ophelia's reaction is, at least, vehemently right-minded: "This is perfectly horrible!" she exclaims. "You ought to be ashamed of yourselves!"

Miss Ophelia, as we may suppose, was speaking for the author; her exclamation is the moral, neatly framed, and incontestable like those improving mottoes sometimes found hanging on the walls of furnished rooms. And, like these mottoes, before which one invariably flinches, recognizing an insupportable, almost an indecent glibness, she and St. Clare are terribly in earnest. Neither of them questions the medieval morality from which their dialogue springs: black, white, the devil, the next world—posing its alternatives between heaven and the flames—were realities for them as, of course, they were for their creator. They spurned and were terrified of the darkness, striving mightily for the light; and considered from this aspect, Miss Ophelia's exclamation, like Mrs. Stowe's novel, achieves a bright, almost a lurid significance, like the light from a fire which consumes a witch. This is the more striking as one considers the novels of Negro oppression written in our own, more enlightened day, all of which say only: "This is perfectly horrible! You ought to be ashamed of yourselves!" (Let us ignore, for the moment, those novels of oppression written by Negroes, which add only a raging, near-paranoiac postscript to this statement and actually reinforce, as I hope to make clear later, the principles which activate the oppression they decry.)

Uncle Tom's Cabin is a very bad novel, having, in its self-righteous, virtuous sentimentality, much in common with *Little Women*. Sentimentality, the ostentatious parading of excessive and spurious

emotion, is the mark of dishonesty, the inability to feel; the wet eyes of the sentimentalist betray his aversion to experience, his fear of life, his arid heart; and it is always, therefore, the signal of secret and violent inhumanity, the mask of cruelty. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*—like its multitudinous, hard-boiled descendants—is a catalogue of violence. This is explained by the nature of Mrs. Stowe's subject matter, her laudable determination to flinch from nothing in presenting the complete picture; an explanation which falters only if we pause to ask whether or not her picture is indeed complete; and what constriction or failure of perception forced her to so depend on the description of brutality—unmotivated, senseless—and to leave unanswered and unnoticed the only important question: what it was, after all, that moved her people to such deeds.

But this, let us say, was beyond Mrs. Stowe's powers; she was not so much a novelist as an impassioned pamphleteer; her book was not intended to do anything more than prove that slavery was wrong; was, in fact, perfectly horrible. This makes material for a pamphlet but it is hardly enough for a novel; and the only question left to ask is why we are bound still within the same constriction. How is it that we are so loath to make a further journey than that made by Mrs. Stowe, to discover and reveal something a little closer to the truth?

But that battered word, truth, having made its appearance here, confronts one immediately with a series of riddles and has, moreover, since so many gospels are preached, the unfortunate tendency to make one belligerent. Let us say, then, that truth, as used here, is meant to imply a devotion to the human being, his freedom and fulfillment; freedom which cannot be legislated, fulfillment which cannot be charted. This is the prime concern, the frame of reference; it is not to be confused with a devotion to Humanity which is too easily equated with a devotion to a Cause; and Causes, as we know, are notoriously bloodthirsty. We have, as it seems to me, in this most mechanical and interlocking of civilizations, attempted to lop this creature down to the status of a time-saving invention. He is not, after all, merely a member of a Society or a Group or a deplorable conundrum to be explained by Science. He is—and how old-fashioned the words sound!—something more than that, something resolutely indefinable, unpredictable. In overlooking, denying, evading his complexity—which is nothing more

than the disquieting complexity of ourselves—we are diminished and we perish; only within this web of ambiguity, paradox, this hunger, danger, darkness, can we find at once ourselves and the power that will free us from ourselves. It is this power of revelation which is the business of the novelist, this journey toward a more vast reality which must take precedence over all other claims. What is today parroted as his Responsibility—which seems to mean that he must make formal declaration that he is involved in, and affected by, the lives of other people and to say something improving about this somewhat self-evident fact—is, when he believes it, his corruption and our loss; moreover, it is rooted in, interlocked with and intensifies this same mechanization. Both *Gentleman's Agreement* and *The Postman Always Rings Twice* exemplify this terror of the human being, the determination to cut him down to size. And in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* we may find foreshadowing of both: the formula created by the necessity to find a lie more palatable than the truth has been handed down and memorized and persists yet with a terrible power.

It is interesting to consider one more aspect of Mrs. Stowe's novel, the method she used to solve the problem of writing about a black man at all. Apart from her lively procession of field hands, house niggers, Chloe, Topsy, etc.—who are the stock, lovable figures presenting no problem—she has only three other Negroes in the book. These are the important ones and two of them may be dismissed immediately, since we have only the author's word that they are Negro and they are, in all other respects, as white as she can make them. The two are George and Eliza, a married couple with a wholly adorable child—whose quaintness, incidentally, and whose charm, rather put one in mind of a darky bootblack doing a buck and wing to the clatter of condescending coins. Eliza is a beautiful, pious hybrid, light enough to pass—the heroine of *Quality* might, indeed, be her reincarnation—differing from the genteel mistress who has overseered her education only in the respect that she is a servant. George is darker, but makes up for it by being a mechanical genius, and is, moreover, sufficiently un-Negroid to pass through town, a fugitive from his master, disguised as a Spanish gentleman, attracting no attention whatever beyond admiration. They are a race apart from Topsy. It transpires by the end of the novel, through one of those

energetic, last-minute convolutions of the plot, that Eliza has some connection with French gentility. The figure from whom the novel takes its name, Uncle Tom, who is a figure of controversy yet, is jet-black, wooly-haired, illiterate; and he is phenomenally forbearing. He has to be; he is black; only through this forbearance can he survive or triumph. (Cf. Faulkner's preface to *The Sound and the Fury*: These others were not Compsons. They were black:—They endured.) His triumph is metaphysical, unearthly; since he is black, born without the light, it is only through humility, the incessant mortification of the flesh, that he can enter into communion with God or man. The virtuous rage of Mrs. Stowe is motivated by nothing so temporal as a concern for the relationship of men to one another—or, even, as she would have claimed, by a concern for their relationship to God—but merely by a panic of being hurled into the flames, of being caught in traffic with the devil. She embraced this merciless doctrine with all her heart, bargaining shamelessly before the throne of grace: God and salvation becoming her personal property, purchased with the coin of her virtue. Here, black equates with evil and white with grace; if, being mindful of the necessity of good works, she could not cast out the blacks—a wretched, huddled mass, apparently, claiming, like an obsession, her inner eye—she could not embrace them either without purifying them of sin. She must cover their intimidating nakedness, robe them in white, the garments of salvation; only thus could she herself be delivered from ever-present sin, only thus could she bury, as St. Paul demanded, “the carnal man, the man of the flesh.” Tom, therefore, her only black man, has been robbed of his humanity and divested of his sex. It is the price for that darkness with which he has been branded.

Uncle Tom's Cabin, then, is activated by what might be called a theological terror, the terror of damnation; and the spirit that breathes in this book, hot, self-righteous, fearful, is not different from that spirit of medieval times which sought to exorcize evil by burning witches; and is not different from that terror which activates a lynch mob. One need not, indeed, search for examples so historic or so gaudy; this is a warfare waged daily in the heart, a warfare so vast, so relentless and so powerful that the interracial handshake or the interracial marriage can be as crucifying as the public hanging or the secret rape. This panic motivates

our cruelty, this fear of the dark makes it impossible that our lives shall be other than superficial; this, interlocked with and feeding our glittering, mechanical, inescapable civilization which has put to death our freedom.

This, notwithstanding that the avowed aim of the American protest novel is to bring greater freedom to the oppressed. They are forgiven, on the strength of these good intentions, whatever violence they do to language, whatever excessive demands they make of credibility. It is, indeed, considered the sign of a frivolity so intense as to approach decadence to suggest that these books are both badly written and wildly improbable. One is told to put first things first, the good of society coming before niceties of style or characterization. Even if this were incontestable—for what exactly is the “good” of society?—it argues an insuperable confusion, since literature and sociology are not one and the same; it is impossible to discuss them as if they were. Our passion for categorization, life neatly fitted into pegs, has led to an unforeseen, paradoxical distress; confusion, a breakdown of meaning. Those categories which were meant to define and control the world for us have boomeranged us into chaos; in which limbo we whirl, clutching the straws of our definitions. The “protest” novel, so far from being disturbing, is an accepted and comforting aspect of the American scene, ramifying that framework we believe to be so necessary. Whatever unsettling questions are raised are evanescent, titillating; remote, for this has nothing to do with us, it is safely ensconced in the social arena, where, indeed, it has nothing to do with anyone, so that finally we receive a very definite thrill of virtue from the fact that we are reading such a book at all. This report from the pit reassures us of its reality and its darkness and of our own salvation; and “As long as such books are being published,” an American liberal once said to me, “everything will be all right.”

But unless one's ideal of society is a race of neatly analyzed, hard-working ciphers, one can hardly claim for the protest novels the lofty purpose they claim for themselves or share the present optimism concerning them. They emerge for what they are: a mirror of our confusion, dishonesty, panic, trapped and immobilized in the sunlit prison of the American dream. They are fantasies, connecting nowhere

with reality, sentimental; in exactly the same sense that such movies as *The Best Years of Our Lives* or the works of Mr. James M. Cain are fantasies. Beneath the dazzling pyrotechnics of these current operas one may still discern, as the controlling force, the intense theological preoccupations of Mrs. Stowe, the sick vacuities of *The Rover Boys*. Finally, the aim of the protest novel becomes something very closely resembling the zeal of those alabaster missionaries to Africa to cover the nakedness of the natives, to hurry them into the pallid arms of Jesus and thence into slavery. The aim has now become to reduce all Americans to the compulsive, bloodless dimensions of a guy named Joe.

It is the peculiar triumph of society—and its loss—that it is able to convince those people to whom it has given inferior status of the reality of this decree; it has the force and the weapons to translate its dictum into fact, so that the allegedly inferior are actually made so, insofar as the societal realities are concerned. This is a more hidden phenomenon now than it was in the days of serfdom, but it is no less implacable. Now, as then, we find ourselves bound, first without, then within, by the nature of our categorization. And escape is not effected through a bitter railing against this trap; it is as though this very striving were the only motion needed to spring the trap upon us. We take our shape, it is true, within and against that cage of reality bequeathed us at our birth; and yet it is precisely through our dependence on this reality that we are most endlessly betrayed. Society is held together by our need; we bind it together with legend, myth, coercion, fearing that without it we will be hurled into that void, within which, like the earth before the Word was spoken, the foundations of society are hidden. From this void—ourselves—it is the function of society to protect us; but it is only this void, our unknown selves, demanding, forever, a new act of creation, which can save us—“from the evil that is in the world.” With the same motion, at the same time, it is this toward which we endlessly struggle and from which, endlessly, we struggle to escape.

It must be remembered that the oppressed and the oppressor are bound together within the same society; they accept the same criteria, they share the same beliefs, they both alike depend on the same reality. Within this cage it is romantic, more, meaningless, to speak of a “new” society as the desire of the oppressed, for that shivering dependence on

the props of reality which he shares with the *Herrenvolk* makes a truly “new” society impossible to conceive. What is meant by a new society is one in which inequalities will disappear, in which vengeance will be exacted; either there will be no oppressed at all, or the oppressed and the oppressor will change places. But, finally, as it seems to me, what the rejected desire is, is an elevation of status, acceptance within the present community. Thus, the African, exile, pagan, hurried off the auction block and into the fields, fell on his knees before that God in Whom he must now believe; who had made him, but not in His image. This tableau, this impossibility, is the heritage of the Negro in America: *Wash me*, cried the slave to his Maker, *and I shall be whiter, whiter than snow!* For black is the color of evil; only the robes of the saved are white. It is this cry, implacable on the air and in the skull, that he must live with. Beneath the widely published catalogue of brutality—bringing to mind, somehow, an image, a memory of church-bells burdening the air—is this reality which, in the same nightmare notion, he both flees and rushes to embrace. In America, now, this country devoted to the death of the paradox—which may, therefore, be put to death by one—his lot is as ambiguous as a tableau by Kafka. To flee or not, to move or not, it is all the same; his doom is written on his forehead, it is carried in his heart. In *Native Son*, Bigger Thomas stands on a Chicago street corner watching airplanes flown by white men racing against the sun and “Goddamn” he says, the bitterness bubbling up like blood, remembering a million indignities, the terrible, rat-infested house, the humiliation of home-relief, the intense, aimless, ugly bickering, hating it; hatred smoulders through these pages like sulphur fire. All of Bigger’s life is controlled, defined by his hatred and his fear. And later, his fear drives him to murder and his hatred to rape; he dies, having come, through this violence, we are told, for the first time, to a kind of life, having for the first time redeemed his manhood. Below the surface of this novel there lies, as it seems to me, a continuation, a complement of that monstrous legend it was written to destroy. Bigger is Uncle Tom’s descendant, flesh of his flesh, so exactly opposite a portrait that, when the books are placed together, it seems that the contemporary Negro novelist and the dead New England woman are locked together in a deadly, timeless battle; the one uttering merciless exhortations, the other shouting curses. And, indeed, within this web of lust and fury, black and white can only

thrust and counter-thrust, long for each other's slow, exquisite death; death by torture, acid, knives and burning; the thrust, the counter-thrust, the longing making the heavier that cloud which blinds and suffocates them both, so that they go down into the pit together. Thus has the cage betrayed us all, this moment, our life, turned to nothing through our terrible attempts to insure it. For Bigger's tragedy is not that he is cold or black or hungry, not even that he is American, black; but that he has accepted a theology that denies him life, that he admits the possibility of his being sub-human and feels constrained, therefore, to battle for his humanity according to those brutal criteria bequeathed him at his birth. But our humanity is our burden, our life; we need not battle for it; we need only to do what is infinitely more difficult—that is, accept it. The failure of the protest novel lies in its rejection of life, the human being, the denial of his beauty, dread, power, in its insistence that it is his categorization alone which is real and which cannot be transcended.

I. Course Hero:

A. Summary:

- Baldwin examines the "social protest" novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) written by American writer Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–96), which he finds to be "a very bad novel" because of its sentimentality. In Baldwin's eyes, sentimentality is "the mark of dishonesty," and therefore masks cruelty. One issue Baldwin takes with *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is that while its message is effective for a political pamphlet, it is "hardly enough for a novel." Novels should aim to "discover and reveal something a little closer to the truth," but Baldwin recognizes that truth is a complicated thing, since sometimes lies are "more palatable than the truth." Even within the novel, black is equated with evil and white with good. In Baldwin's mind, this conjures up medieval notions of terror and damnation. Yet he points out that one needn't go back all through history to find parallels, for it is still "warfare waged daily in the heart" for African Americans.
- Baldwin acknowledges that the aim of the protest novel is to "bring greater freedom to the oppressed," and therefore believes some aspects can be forgiven because of their intent. However, he also views them as "a mirror of our confusion, dishonesty, panic." He also fears they too closely resemble the machinations of white missionaries who wished to convert Africans, which then only ushered them into slavery. To him the protest novel encourages blacks to become more like whites. And even though slavery is gone, African Americans still find themselves bound to a category of perceived inferiority by society. Striving against the category only seems to "spring the trap upon us." Baldwin notes that in this way "the oppressed and the oppressor are bound together within the same society," a relationship that can only be maintained by depending on the same criteria, beliefs, and reality. This "cage" has betrayed both African Americans and whites, who are seemingly locked in a battle of perpetual hatred. In this way the protest novel fails because it denies humanity and emphasizes human categorization, which is not what any race needs or ultimately will be helped by.

B. Analysis:

- The first essay of *Notes of a Native Son* sets its sights on social protest novels. Baldwin's first selection is the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which was famous as a work of "social protest fiction." One of Baldwin's criticisms of the novel lies in its "sentimentality," which he feels is "the mark of dishonesty." As Baldwin laid out in his autobiographical notes, he is after truth, no matter how uncomfortable. He worries that the willingness "to find a lie more palatable than the truth has been handed down and memorized." The fact that a lie can be more palatable than the truth seems to lie at the heart of much of Baldwin's criticism and inquiry, since he believes that the present can't be honest until the past is

examined truthfully. Otherwise, life with all its injustice, chiefly racial in his case, will persist.

- Rather than spur social change, Baldwin claims that a novel like *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is "a mirror of our confusion, dishonesty, panic." What's more, these kinds of novels seem to encourage African Americans to become like white Americans, "the compulsive, bloodless dimensions of a guy named Joe." He finds it peculiar and heartbreaking that society is able to "convince those people to whom it has given inferior status of the reality of this decree." This becomes a self-fulfilling and inescapable prophecy. In a way, for him, it is even more insidious than it was when serfdom was openly accepted as a division in society. Striving against the prescribed status only "springs the trap" and thus offers no movement or any hope of movement. However, Baldwin points out that, "the oppressed and the oppressor are bound together within the same society."
- Because of this interdependence, a different kind of society seems all but impossible to achieve, since inequality is built into the very fabric of the system as revealed in the novel. What this means for African Americans is that "his doom is written on his forehead, it is carried in his heart."

II. Litchart:

Summary

In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the white master St. Clare tells his cousin, Miss Ophelia, that black people have been put in the service of white people in this world, and that this injustice may perhaps be corrected in the afterlife. Miss Ophelia, presumably voicing the opinion of the author, Harriet Beecher Stowe, is horrified. Baldwin argues that the characters in the novel never question the simplistic terms within which they frame morality. This corresponds to contemporary morals about racial oppression, which rarely go beyond shallow, righteous indignation. Baldwin concludes that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is "a very bad novel" because of its "virtuous sentimentality." Sentimentality is dishonest and cowardly, and thus slyly cruel. Stowe fails to interrogate peoples' reasons for acting the way they do, and for this reason *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is more of a "pamphlet" than a novel.

Analysis

In order to understand Baldwin's critique of "*Uncle Tom's Cabin*," it is important to bear in mind that the novel is widely celebrated as a landmark in the history of racial equality and a symbol of progress. In this essay, Baldwin suggests that such praise is unwarranted for a number of reasons, the first of which is that "*Uncle Tom's Cabin*" is not a very good novel. Novels should present us with a complex and honest view of reality that enriches our understanding of the human condition. Instead, "*Uncle Tom's Cabin*" just rehashes simplistic moral positions.

Baldwin argues that in order for the novel to be more truthful, Stowe would have had to be committed to representing humanity, rather than a "Cause." He claims that oversimplifying people's complexity and ambiguity diminishes humanity. Baldwin points out that there are actually fairly few black characters in the book, and that they are either rendered in a stereotypical fashion or are given attributes of whiteness. The controversial character of Uncle Tom, meanwhile, is only redeemed from his blackness through his total humility. Ultimately, Stowe maintains the association of blackness with evil and whiteness with purity. The novel is written out of a fear of damnation and gives the reader a false sense of assurance that they are virtuous simply for reading it. In reality, protest novels like *Uncle Tom's Cabin* are nothing more than sentimental fantasies that reflect fear, confusion, and denial of truth.

Baldwin compares the goal of the protest novel to that of white missionaries in Africa. He laments the fact that society is able to convince oppressed people that they are inferior to their oppressors. People often forget that both the oppressed and the oppressor are "bound together" by the same beliefs. This is why many black people themselves continue to associate whiteness with virtue. Baldwin discusses Richard Wright's novel *Native Son*, and argues that its central character, Bigger Thomas, is in fact a "descendant" of Stowe's Uncle Tom. The tragedy of Bigger's life is that he has accepted the terms of America's racist ideology, and thus must "battle for his humanity according to those brutal criteria." Protest novels fail because they do not engage the full reality of human existence, instead reducing people to simplistic categories.

In this passage, Baldwin argues against the assumption that, because "*Uncle Tom's Cabin*" is an anti-slavery novel, it is automatically racially progressive. While Stowe's intention may have been to portray black characters in a positive light, she ultimately undermines this goal by preserving the racist principle that virtue is linked to whiteness. Defenders of Stowe might suggest that it would have been difficult to overcome such a mindset as a white woman living in 19th-century America. While this is arguably true, Baldwin's point that the novel should not be read as a symbol of racial progress still stands.

Baldwin's argument that both oppressed and oppressor share the same beliefs is provocative. Many would counter that black people have a totally different perspective on the world than white people, and thus it doesn't make sense to say both groups hold the same ideas. However, while people of different races do certainly have different perspectives, they nonetheless share the same world—a world saturated with racist ideology. As Baldwin suggests through his discussion of "*Native Son*," many black people come to unconsciously believe and replicate racist ideology.

III. GradeSaver:

A. Summary:

- In this chapter, Baldwin discusses two novels, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Richard Wright's *Native Son*, in order to develop his ideas about protest novels. He argues that protest novels oversimplify the complexity of human beings for the sake of putting forward a message.
- Baldwin is against what he calls "moralism" in fiction. Protest novels are guilty of using a "medieval morality" that clearly separates good characters and bad ones, right and wrong, black and white. The goal of this morality is to make people feel shame. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, for example, makes its point far too obvious. The story, Baldwin asserts, "achieves a bright, almost lurid significance, like the light from a fire which consumes a witch." This metaphor shows that, while the book might be against racism, it causes a kind of violence.
- Another problem with protest novels like *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is that they are overly sentimental. There is so much over-exaggerated emotion in the novel that it reveals an "inability to feel." Sentimentality is actually an escape from emotion for Baldwin: "The wet eyes of the sentimentalist betray his aversion to experience, his fear of life, his arid heart." Similarly, in trying to give a complete picture of society, these novels end up incomplete. They reproduce the same violence that exists in the world without any significant insight into the causes and effects of this violence. It stays on the surface, letting readers think they have understood an issue which makes them complacent and prevents further investigation.
- These weaknesses in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* are partially understandable, Baldwin says. Stowe was a writer of pamphlets rather than a novelist. She wrote the novel to make one simple point: slavery is wrong. Yet a novel ought to be more than that, Baldwin argues. Good intentions are not enough to redeem bad writing. While literature should reveal the complexity of human beings, Stowe relies on stock characters who are only there to prove a certain point. Characters like field hands and servants are there only to be lovable and charming. In the novel, there are three black characters, but two of them are described as acting like white people and the reader only knows they are black because Stowe tells us so. Then there is Uncle Tom himself, a "jet-black, woolly-haired illiterate" who is more of a saint than a fully-fleshed out character. He has no humanity or sexuality; he is simplified into an argument.
- In reducing characters to parts of the argument, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* commits violence against them. Again he describes these kinds of books as a witch-burning or a lynch mob. The use of violence to get rid of evil ends up replicating the same violence these books condemn. The desire to rid the world of evil without attempting to understand it comes from a place of panic. Even though it might be good-intentioned, it makes us superficial.

- Baldwin then discusses Wright's novel *Native Son*, with its protagonist Bigger Thomas. Bigger grew up in a slum in Chicago and uses violence, murder, and rape as a way to reclaim agency in a world that does not value him. However, Baldwin argues that using violence as a way for this character to “redeem his manhood” just reproduces the racist stereotype that black people are violent. Baldwin writes: “ Bigger's tragedy is not that he is cold or black or hungry, not even that he is American, black; but that he has accepted a theology that denies him life, that admits the possibility of his being sub-human.” Bigger’s story replicates the idea that the only relationship between black and white people is one of conflict, hate, and distrust. Baldwin asserts that what we really need from literature is reminders of our true, complex humanity.

B. Analysis:

- “Everybody’s Protest Novel” centers on the relationship between politics and literature, asking if such a thing as “political literature” is possible and what its effects are. In short, Baldwin argues that there is a difference between a pamphlet and a novel. One might write a novel to make a political point. However, good intentions are not enough to make this kind of novel real literature. What this requires is a deep digging into humanity in all its complexity.
- The problem with the protest novels Baldwin discusses is that they deny this complexity. They oversimplify issues and deny choice to their characters. This problem with protest novels overlaps with a larger problem in modern society, which according to Baldwin is always trying to simply human beings, make them into cogs in the machine. In the same way, protest novels deny human beings their complexity and try to make people into mechanisms that fulfill a function.
- As a writer, Baldwin sees humanity instead as a “web of ambiguity, paradox.” People contradict themselves and are often mysterious, unaware even themselves of what they want and who they are. This complexity is what the novelist must show. One can be committed to a good cause, but a novelist must not let the cause get in the way of revealing humans in all their confusing realness. The world’s problems are complex and cannot be solved but cutting them down into bite-sized pieces. To treat the world and its people in this way might be comforting, but it cannot be real literature. Baldwin writes that “The failure of the protest novel lies in its rejection of life, the human being, the denial of his beauty, dread, power, in its insistence that it is categorization alone which is real.” Humans cannot be defined based on any simple categories. Literature should resist categorization through “devotion to the human being, his freedom and fulfillment.”

IV. Interesting Literature:

A. Summary:

- Baldwin begins by referring to a moment in Harriet Beecher Stowe's nineteenth-century anti-slavery novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in which a white master tells his cousin, Miss Ophelia, that black people have been put in subjection for the benefit of white people, but this imbalance of power may be redressed in the next life. Miss Ophelia (whom Baldwin assumes is voicing the opinions of Stowe, the author, herself) responds by calling the situation 'perfectly horrible' before telling the white master that he ought to be ashamed.
- Baldwin objects to the simplistic 'medieval morality' in Stowe's novel, which he argues is symptomatic of a problem found in many more recent novels about the oppression of black people, too. Even many novels on this subject written by black authors add little to this binary good/evil moral attitude, and even help to uphold the principles which have caused the oppression of black people in the first place.
- For Baldwin, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is a bad novel, because it is sentimental, and so founded on the performance of insincere emotion, rather than authentic feeling. The major omission in Stowe's novel is her complete lack of curiosity concerning what moved white people to enforce slavery in the first place. Baldwin attributes this failure to Stowe's limited artistic talents: she wanted to use her novel as a vehicle for the message that slavery is 'horrible', and wasn't interested in doing much else besides that. But Baldwin sees little progress having been made in the literature written on this subject – the oppression of African Americans – in the hundred years since Stowe was writing.
- Another problem with Stowe's novel is her attitude towards the few black characters in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and especially the title character, who patiently endures all of his suffering with humility. For Baldwin, Stowe's Christian education meant that she saw black people as needing to undergo 'purification' – and to become, in several senses, 'white' – before they could be accepted by God.
- The whole of Stowe's novel is dominated by her fear of hell and damnation. It is this 'medieval' fear which makes white people like Stowe determined to 'save' black people, and it is the same attitude which means African Americans are denied their freedom even to this day.
- These protest novels are a problem because they uphold the very ideology they are meant to challenge: they have become comforting rather than disturbing, since their very existence suggests that people are doing something to address oppression, so everything will turn out all right in the end.
- Likening the authors of protest novels to white missionaries in Africa, Baldwin argues that both of these people seek to convince black people of their innate inferiority and their need to be made like white people. So both oppressor and

oppressed actually have the same beliefs. Baldwin ends by considering the character of Bigger Thomas from African-American writer Richard Wright's 1940 novel *Native Son*. The issue Baldwin has with Bigger is that his entire life and identity are a product of his hatred and fear.

- And although Wright was trying to overturn the kind of novel Stowe was writing almost a century before, Baldwin actually sees *Native Son* as a continuation of the same idea. Bigger Thomas is Uncle Tom's opposite, but because he is so clearly the inversion of Stowe's character, he complements rather than subverts him, and thus reinforces Stowe's approach. The only difference is that, whereas Stowe urged her readers to have pity for Uncle Tom, Bigger Thomas bitterly curses white people for making him who he is. Bigger Thomas has accepted a 'theology' which 'denies him life'.

B. Analysis:

- As his closing remarks make clear, James Baldwin objects to the protest novel in its current form (he was writing in the late 1940s, we should remember) because it rejects 'life' and 'the human being', in favour of grouping people together into particular categories. 'Everybody's Protest Novel' argues that as long as authors of protest novels content themselves with writing 'types' rather than complex characters, they will never be able to write something that goes beyond social polemic.
- Indeed, in some ways we might compare 'Everybody's Protest Novel' with Martin Luther King's famous assertion, in his 1963 'I Have a Dream' speech, that he dreamed of a day when his children would be judged not by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character. Such 'character', regardless of race or background, is what writers need to embrace. Common humanity in all its forms, good and bad, are what Baldwin wants writers of protest novels to acknowledge and reflect. Sadly, Baldwin reflects, black characters in protest novels are always a particular type of black character, who strike the reader as inauthentic.
- And because they always have a 'Cause' (note Baldwin's use of the capital letter) to promote or champion, they make their characters representative 'types' rather than complex, fully rounded individuals: for instance, the faithful and long-suffering black servant, or the angry and hate-filled young black man intent on revenge. Neither type acknowledges the complexity of human beings, even if these authors' hearts were in the right place when they wrote their novels.
- This is especially a problem when authors of novels about black oppression write African-American characters. Stowe writes an overly subservient and patient character in Uncle Tom, whereas Richard Wright offers readers an angry man who commits terrible crimes which he justifies on account of the oppression and discrimination he has faced.

Writing and Language Test

35 MINUTES, 44 QUESTIONS

Turn to Section 2 of your answer sheet to answer the questions in this section.

DIRECTIONS

Each passage below is accompanied by a number of questions. For some questions, you will consider how the passage might be revised to improve the expression of ideas. For other questions, you will consider how the passage might be edited to correct errors in sentence structure, usage, or punctuation. A passage or a question may be accompanied by one or more graphics (such as a table or graph) that you will consider as you make revising and editing decisions.

Some questions will direct you to an underlined portion of a passage. Other questions will direct you to a location in a passage or ask you to think about the passage as a whole.

After reading each passage, choose the answer to each question that most effectively improves the quality of writing in the passage or that makes the passage conform to the conventions of standard written English. Many questions include a “NO CHANGE” option. Choose that option if you think the best choice is to leave the relevant portion of the passage as it is.

Questions 1-11 are based on the following passage.

The Case for Electronic Health Records

The US health-care system has made significant strides in the implementation of systems that manage electronic health records, which include information such as a patient’s medical history, medications currently

1 prescribed, and a list of allergies. From 2001 to 2013, the use of electronic health record systems by

1

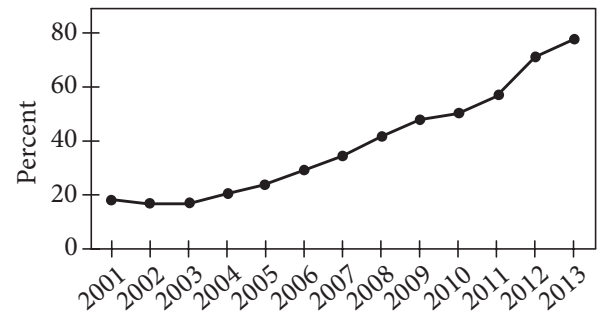
- A) NO CHANGE
- B) prescribed; and
- C) prescribed: and
- D) prescribed and,

office-based physicians **2** began to decline only in the last three years. While this progress is commendable, the US health-care system needs to make the full transition to electronic health records a high priority.

2

The writer wants to complete the sentence with accurate and relevant information from the graph to support the claim made about advances in the implementation of electronic health record systems. Which choice best accomplishes this goal?

Percentage of Office-Based Physicians with Electronic Health Record Systems, 2001–2013



Adapted from National Center for Health Statistics, *Data Brief Number 143*, US Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Published in 2014.

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) increased most dramatically between 2011 and 2012.
- C) increased from less than 20 percent of physicians to nearly 80 percent of physicians.
- D) fluctuated from year to year until about 80 percent of physicians were using electronic health records.

3 Regrettably, electronic medical records require infrastructure that can be expensive to build; they don't require physical storage space, they don't need to be photocopied and collated, and 4 they are less likely to be physically misplaced. More importantly, electronic records accelerate communication between 5 different and various health-care providers, allowing for more efficient patient treatment. For example, when paramedics have access to electronic records in ambulances, they can learn what kinds of treatment they should immediately begin on a 6 patient. Immediate treatment results in safer and earlier care. Even small improvements in efficiency add up. The Veterans Health Administration, the largest integrated health-care system in the United States, reports that after the implementation of electronic health records in 1995, its total productivity has increased by 6 percent per year.

3

Which phrase most effectively sets up the examples in the second part of the sentence?

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) Electronic health records provide many advantages over paper ones:
- C) Researchers have weighed the benefits and drawbacks of electronic health records:
- D) Typically, electronic health records need a full-time staff to maintain them:

4

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) because they are
- C) being
- D) DELETE the underlined portion.

5

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) different
- C) diverse, different
- D) singularly different

6

Which choice most effectively combines the sentences at the underlined portion?

- A) patient, resulting
- B) patient and results
- C) patient, and those treatments result
- D) patient because it results

[1] These concerns, however, are also problems for paper records. [2] Despite these clear benefits, some patients and medical professionals still harbor concerns about the potential for error and the violation of patient privacy when electronic records are used. [3] By no means free from errors, handwritten records are especially prone to errors resulting from illegible handwriting. [4] Electronic health record systems can actually reduce errors by, for instance, cross-referencing drug [7] information, this provides doctors with automatic warnings about possible adverse drug interactions. [5] [8] Likewise, at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, Massachusetts, serious medical errors decreased by 55 percent after an electronic record system was implemented. [6] Furthermore, patient privacy is no more threatened by electronic records than it is by paper records, which [9] are—according to the US Department of Health and Human Services, typically accessed by at least 150 different health-care professionals. [10]

The best way to address these concerns about accuracy and privacy [11] are not to avoid adopting electronic health record systems but rather to implement them effectively. The benefits of fully transitioning from paper to electronic health records far outweigh any perceived disadvantages.

7

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) information to provide
- C) information; providing
- D) information, provides

8

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) Still,
- C) In this case,
- D) In fact,

9

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) are
- C) are,
- D) are;

10

To make this paragraph most logical, sentence 2 should be placed

- A) where it is now.
- B) before sentence 1.
- C) after sentence 5.
- D) after sentence 6.

11

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) have been
- C) had been
- D) is

Questions 12-22 are based on the following passage and supplementary material.

The Beaver as Ecosystem Engineer

[1] An ecosystem is a complex web of interactions between organisms and their habitats. [2] Each component is **12** vital to the sustainability of the others and to the system as a whole. [3] Beavers, large rodents that use sticks, mud, and leaves to build dams in streams, are perhaps one of the best examples of the **13** interpersonal relationship among all aspects of an ecosystem. [4] New efforts to cultivate beaver populations reflect a growing recognition of the vital role beaver dams play in combating the effects of drought and preserving species diversity. [5] Beavers fell trees to build their dams, and the ponds that form behind a dam can flood the surrounding area. [6] Despite the seeming drawbacks to beaver dams, emerging research confirms that they actually provide significant environmental benefits. **14**

Scientists have called the beaver an “ecosystem engineer” because its dams can alter the ecological makeup of its habitat. By regulating water flow in **15** streams. Dams have ripple effects that radiate to

12

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) vital: to the sustainability of the others
- C) vital, to the sustainability of the others,
- D) vital; to the sustainability of the others

13

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) interdependent
- C) societal
- D) associative

14

To make this paragraph most logical, sentence 4 should be placed

- A) where it is now.
- B) after sentence 1.
- C) after sentence 5.
- D) after sentence 6.

15

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) streams; dams
- C) streams, dams
- D) streams—dams

all surrounding organisms. **16** The ponds that form as a result of dams retain nutrient-rich sediment, **17** fostering a variety of plant life and multiplying food sources such as plankton. Attracted by these resources, many different kinds of wildlife **18** inhabits beaver ponds.

16

At this point, the writer is considering adding the following sentence.

A beaver's life span averages 10–12 years.

Should the writer make this addition here?

- A) Yes, because it reinforces the scientists' characterization of beavers as "ecosystem engineers."
- B) Yes, because it clarifies information in the previous sentence about the impact of beavers.
- C) No, because the detail is not necessary for understanding beavers' impact on their ecosystems.
- D) No, because it does not provide enough explanation of the factors affecting the beaver's life span.

17

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) adopting
- C) raising
- D) rearing

18

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) inhabit
- C) are inhabited
- D) have inhabited

Recent studies suggest that beaver dams not only create diversely populated ecosystems but also **19** preserve them during times of environmental stress. A landmark 2008 study by ecologists at the University of Alberta found that the presence of beaver populations can mitigate the effects of drought on wetlands. The researchers observed that ponds in Elk Island National Park in Canada that had developed active beaver colonies held significantly more water during years when beavers were present than they did during years when beavers were absent. Furthermore, a group of ponds that had not been recolonized by beavers showed a **20** smaller increase in area of open water over the same period.

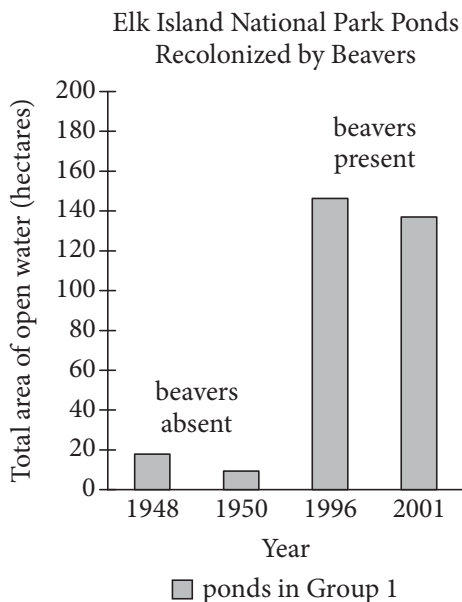
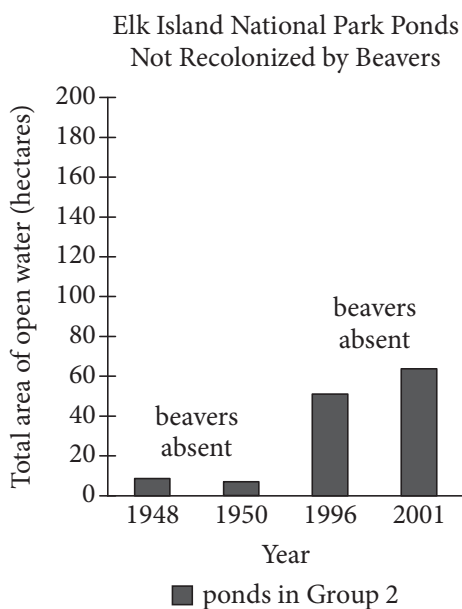
19

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) to preserve them
- C) preserving them
- D) they are preserved

20

Which choice best reflects the information provided in figures 1 and 2?

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) marked decline
- C) greater increase
- D) gradual reduction

Figure 1**Figure 2**

Figures adapted from Glynnis A. Hood and Suzanne E. Bayley, "Beaver (*Castor canadensis*) Mitigate the Effects of Climate on the Area of Open Water in Boreal Wetlands in Western Canada." ©2008 by Biological Conservation.

21 In addition to studying wildlife, researchers are collaborating with local officials to promote beaver populations in habitats where they might be beneficial. Washington State’s Lands Council, a nonprofit organization, has begun working with the state’s Department of Ecology to reintroduce beavers to 10,000 miles of suitable habitat. Officials predict that beaver dams could help retain more than 650 trillion gallons of springtime melted snow, which could help stabilize water levels in streams during dry months. This project provides a low-cost alternative to the construction of artificial dams, which could cost billions of dollars. Through such initiatives, beaver populations are doing what they do **22** best; “engineering” healthier, more stable ecosystems.

21

Which choice provides the best transition from the previous paragraph?

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) Despite the beaver’s reputation as a nuisance,
- C) Spurred by these findings,
- D) Motivated by this opportunity,

22

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) best—“engineering,”
- C) best: “engineering”
- D) best, “engineering,”

Questions 23-33 are based on the following passage.

The Giant: Michelangelo's Victory

Toward the end of the 1400s, as the Renaissance was reaching **23** its height in Florence, Italy, members of the city's powerful Wool Guild were celebrating their recently completed city cathedral. It was a triumph that added to Florence's reputation **24** from sophistication and beauty, yet the guild members were eager to **25** fancy it up even more. They wanted a series of statues to adorn the cathedral's exterior, **26** placing high on buttresses so that the art could be admired from afar. The first result of the members' plan brought great acclaim, though not quite in the way they had anticipated.

23

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) it's
- C) its'
- D) their

24

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) for
- C) to
- D) with

25

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) make it look super rich.
- C) increase its splendor.
- D) give it a wow factor.

26

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) they were placed
- C) which were placed
- D) placed

In 1501, guild members began the project by commissioning a statue of David, a biblical hero who had defeated a giant named Goliath. The sculptor chosen was Michelangelo, a twenty-six-year-old artist who already had a reputation for great talent. He was directed to use an enormous block of marble from the cathedral's workshop to create the statue. Nicknamed "the Giant," the block had many problems. It had been quarried more than forty years earlier and had started to weather from exposure to the elements. Even worse, **27** they had previously used it, chipping away material to rough out a basic shape but giving up midtask. **28** The marble came from the Fantiscritti quarries in Carrara, a small town almost 80 miles north of Florence. Michelangelo was faced with trying to sculpt a monumental statue out of a stone that was generally considered ruined.

27

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) other sculptors had previously used it,
- C) it was used by them before,
- D) they used it previously to begin other sculptures,

28

The writer is considering deleting the underlined sentence. Should the sentence be kept or deleted?

- A) Kept, because it provides evidence to support the claim that Michelangelo would succeed where others had failed.
- B) Kept, because it includes details that explain why the citizens of Florence might have been critical of commissioning a sculptor from a different city.
- C) Deleted, because it adds irrelevant information that distracts from the paragraph's focus on the obstacles Michelangelo faced.
- D) Deleted, because it fails to explain why the block had not already been made into a sculpture.

[1] His seventeen-foot-high, intricately detailed figure depicts David in the act of confronting Goliath. [2] Michelangelo had solved the problem of the awkward size and shape of the marble block by positioning David turned slightly sideways with his weight shifted onto one leg, poised as if ready to burst into action. [3] But Michelangelo took on the Giant with zeal and finished the statue in just two years. [4] The statue's form and posture echoed the proportions of classical Roman sculpture, but its expressiveness and level of detail **29** has reflected Renaissance sensibilities. [5] Michelangelo had overcome the limitations of the marble block and, moreover, had turned it into a technical and artistic masterpiece. **30**

Upon viewing the stunning statue, guild members discarded the plan to hoist the statue to an exterior buttress. It was far too beautiful (**31** and was unlike other Renaissance depictions of David) to be placed high above its viewers. After meeting with city officials and

29

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) reflected
- C) had reflected
- D) will reflect

30

To make this paragraph most logical, sentence 3 should be placed

- A) where it is now.
- B) before sentence 1.
- C) after sentence 1.
- D) after sentence 4.

31

Which choice gives a second reason and additional support for the main idea of the paragraph?

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) and depicted a favorite biblical story of the citizens of Florence
- C) and later would come to symbolize Florence's defense of its civil liberties
- D) and, at more than eight tons, far too heavy

prominent citizens, the members agreed that the statue should instead stand outside of Florence's town hall **32** as a symbol and representation of the city's strength and independence. Thus, the guild members achieved their goal of enhancing Florence's **33** prestige.

32

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) to symbolize and represent
- C) as a symbol of
- D) as a representation that symbolized

33

The writer wants to revise the underlined portion so that the concluding sentence summarizes the main ideas of the passage. Which choice best accomplishes this goal?

- A) prestige, and Michelangelo was hailed as a hero in his own right for conquering the Giant and giving Florence a fitting monument.
- B) prestige, and Michelangelo would soon leave Florence for Rome, where he would paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.
- C) prestige, especially after parts of the statue were decorated with gold.
- D) prestige, but even though it boasts works of art like Michelangelo's *David*, Italy today ranks only fifth in terms of revenue generated by tourism.

Questions 34–44 are based on the following passage.

Sharing for Success

34 The twenty-first century has presented both unique challenges and innovative solutions to work-related issues. Both Julie Levine and Julie Rocco desired a healthier work/life balance, but they were hesitant to give up their managerial roles overseeing the production of new vehicles. In order to retain these top engineers, the company proposed a creative **35** solution; job sharing.

As the demand for flexible working options in today's marketplace has grown, job **36** sharing, an arrangement in which one full-time job is split between two employees—has become more common. For

34

Which choice provides the best introduction to the paragraph?

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) Companies are always searching for new and innovative ways to recruit the best employees.
- C) In 2007, two highly successful full-time engineers at a US car company faced the same dilemma.
- D) According to one national survey, the average full-time US employee works about 1,700 hours per year.

35

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) solution. Job
- C) solution job
- D) solution: job

36

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) sharing—
- C) sharing;
- D) sharing:

employees, it provides an appealing alternative to other forms of part-time work, which might not offer comparable health benefits, salary, or stability. For Levine and Rocco, who were compensated at 80 percent of their full-time salaries and benefits, job sharing was a way of continuing to climb the career **37** ladder. They didn't have to work the long hours usually demanded of an employee in a high-level position.

Effective communication is crucial to the success of a job-sharing arrangement. In determining how working time and responsibilities would be divided, **38** steps were taken by Levine and Rocco to ensure that the arrangement provided fluidity and consistency for the employees whom they jointly managed. "It's our job to be seamless," they noted. **39** Nevertheless, they each planned to work three days a week, with a day of overlap on Wednesdays; they also planned to talk on the phone

37

Which choice best combines the sentences at the underlined portion?

- A) ladder, and they weren't having
- B) ladder; however, they didn't have
- C) ladder without having
- D) ladder while still not having

38

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) there were steps taken by Levine and Rocco to ensure
- C) Levine and Rocco took steps to ensure
- D) Levine and Rocco's steps ensured

39

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) To this end,
- C) However,
- D) Similarly,

each evening to discuss the day's work. **40** The job shared by Levine and Rocco was the highest-ranking shared job at the company; when “you have to analyze your day and share it with another brain, you show up the next day ready to run,” Levine said. Studies have confirmed that job sharing can improve work quality by encouraging teamwork. In a 2003 survey of employees at the UK National Health Service, for example, more than 70 percent of job sharers felt that communicating with their partners improved their ability to understand and execute their jobs.

41 Job sharing may present some challenges, though. If job sharers have **42** discordant capabilities or are unable to communicate effectively, the arrangement may not be successful. Job-sharing initiatives may also involve some extra cost for companies, since the salaries

40

Which choice best sets up the information that follows in the next part of the sentence?

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) Levine and Rocco initially had doubts that the arrangement would be successful:
- C) The job shared by Levine and Rocco requires about 80 hours of work total per week:
- D) Both Levine and Rocco found that this collaboration enhanced their job performance:

41

Which choice best sets up the main discussion of the paragraph?

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) Moreover, some workers have responsibilities that are difficult to share.
- C) Still, only some positions are suitable for job sharing.
- D) Flexible work arrangements can reduce stress in employees.

42

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) contrary
- C) irreconcilable
- D) mismatched

and cost of benefits for two job-sharing employees are usually higher than **43** being for a single employee. However, proponents contend that the investment is worthwhile because **44** they enable companies to retain the most talented employees. As can be seen from Levine and Rocco's success in developing a best-selling 2011 sport-utility vehicle, job sharing provides an effective flexible working solution when undertaken by motivated employees and companies.

43

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) that of
- C) those for
- D) DELETE the underlined portion.

44

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) those enable
- C) any of them enables
- D) it enables

STOP

**If you finish before time is called, you may check your work on this section only.
Do not turn to any other section.**