

## HEIghten® Critical Thinking Sample Items

Questions 1 - 2 are based on the material below.

1. Records indicate that William Shakespeare was baptized on April 26, 1564, and buried April 25, 1616, in Stratford-upon-Avon, England.
2. There is no evidence that William Shakespeare attended school, but had he done so, it would have been the local grammar school, and he would have left by age 14.
3. Documents show that by the early 1590s William Shakespeare was a managing partner of the Lord Chamberlain's Men, an acting company in London that built the Globe Theatre.
4. A total of 37 plays list Shakespeare as the author, including 13 that are set in Italy and several that make references to London politics.
5. There is no evidence that Shakespeare traveled outside of England.
6. In writings by others during Shakespeare's lifetime, Shakespeare was often referred to as a writer.
7. There is no manuscript of any play in William Shakespeare's own handwriting; only print versions of his plays exist.
8. No one questioned Shakespeare's authorship of the plays attributed to him during his lifetime or for centuries after his death.
9. Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593) was a brilliant poet and dramatist, educated at Cambridge University, who pioneered blank verse (unrhymed lines, almost always in the pattern of stressed syllables called "iambic pentameter") for dramatic plays.
10. Blank verse praised for its beauty appears frequently in the works attributed to Shakespeare.
11. Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford (1550–1604), whose aristocratic crest of arms depicted a lion shaking a spear, was trained in law, was a court poet, and visited Italy extensively.

**Argument 1: (an abstract of an academic paper in a literary journal)**

**Abstract: "William Shakespeare of Stratford Could Not Have Written the So-called Shakespearean Plays"**

We all know that there was a real person named William Shakespeare, who was born in Stratford in 1564, the son of a middle-class glove-maker, and who died in 1616. He was also a well-known actor and managing partner of an acting company in London in the 1590s. Beyond that, there is not a shred of evidence linking him to the 37 plays ascribed to him. How could an uneducated actor from Stratford have such intimate knowledge of court politics, legal matters, royalty, and Italy (the setting of 13 plays including *Othello*, *Merchant of Venice*, and *All's Well That Ends Well*)? Clearly, the plays reflect a sophisticated intellect, a familiarity with London politics, and a deep understanding of Latin and Greek literature—all improbable for a mere actor who grew up in Stratford and who had at best a grammar-school education. Either Edward de Vere (who is known to have visited Italy and was a court favorite) or Christopher Marlowe (who was college educated and the pioneer of blank verse for dramatic plays) was the real author of these brilliant and nuanced plays.

**Argument 2: The argument below is a rebuttal in the form of a letter to the editor, published in a subsequent issue of the journal that published Argument 1 above.**

It is ludicrous to question Shakespeare’s authorship of the plays. The argument presented in this journal smacks of elitism. Other arguments for that position rely on conspiracy theory and convoluted logic. There is a historical record of such a man who was connected to London theater and whose name was given as the author of the plays. No one questioned Shakespeare’s authorship until hundreds of years after his death. Those who put forward names of the “real” author—over 60 such names have been suggested—have their own agendas, including the elitism already mentioned, or a preference for a particular alternative author. Circumstantial evidence or outrageous ideas such as that Marlowe faked his own death in 1593 and authored some of the plays afterward, or that the real author, for whatever reasons, wanted to keep his own identity hidden, are flimsy and do not hold up under serious scrutiny.

1. Given the information in the facts list, someone wishing to establish that Marlowe is most likely the author of the plays attributed to Shakespeare would be aided in that task if which of the following were found and determined to be authentic? Select all that apply.
  1. Comparisons of Marlowe’s plays with Shakespeare’s plays that show strong linguistic parallels and similar range of vocabulary
  2. Journal entries in Marlowe’s handwriting that note plot elements of a Shakespearean play prior to its being performed
  3. Historical events that continue into the 1600s and parallel key plot elements in the plays

2. From the following facts excerpted from the list, select the two that together most help to support a claim central to Argument 1.
- 2. There is no evidence that William Shakespeare attended school, but had he done so, it would have been the local grammar school, and he would have left by age 14.
  - 4. A total of 37 plays list Shakespeare as the author, including 13 that are set in Italy and several that make references to London politics.
  - 5. There is no evidence that Shakespeare traveled outside of England.
  - 7. There is no manuscript of any play in William Shakespeare’s own handwriting; only print versions of his plays exist.
  - 9. Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593) was a brilliant poet and dramatist, educated at Cambridge University, who pioneered blank verse (unrhymed lines, almost always in the pattern of stressed syllables called “iambic pentameter”) for dramatic plays.

3. The following is an exchange between two contributors to an online literary forum.

**Kate:** Ursula Seti's undated poem "Eucalyptus," which compares the eucalyptus tree's periodic shedding of its bark to various momentous events in her own life, could not have been written before 1960. Before that date, Seti had never left her native Alaska, where it is far too cold for most species of eucalyptus trees to grow. In 1960, however, she visited Australia, where eucalyptus trees are very common, so the poem must have been written during or after that visit.

**Miriam:** But Seti could certainly have known that eucalyptus trees periodically shed their bark without having personally observed that process, so she could have written the poem at any time during her career, which began well before 1960.

Which of the following most accurately characterizes Miriam's response to Kate?

- (A) It shows that Kate's argument assumes the very point that it attempts to demonstrate.
- (B) It draws an opposing conclusion from the evidence cited in Kate's argument.
- (C) It refutes Kate's argument by rejecting one of its unstated assumptions.
- (D) It calls into question one of the statements Kate makes to support her conclusion.

4. In Longport, a survey of residents showed that more of them had taken continuing education classes in literature than in the arts over the last twelve months. If so, some residents must have taken multiple arts classes, because an examination of enrollment figures showed that overall enrollment in continuing education arts classes was higher than overall enrollment in continuing education literature classes.

The reasoning in the passage depends on assuming which of the following?

- (A) There was no substantial enrollment in arts classes by people who were not residents of Longport.
- (B) There were no more literature classes than arts classes.
- (C) Few, if any, residents took both an arts class and a literature class in the last twelve months.
- (D) Most Longport residents took at least one arts class in the last twelve months.

**Questions 5 - 6 are based on the information below.**

In a benefit concert, seven solo performers—Harris, Jones, McIntyre, Nelson, Strapp, Trevino, and Williams—will each sing once only and one after another. The order in which the performers will sing is governed by the following conditions:

Harris must sing at some time before McIntyre sings.

Strapp must sing at some time before Jones sings.

Trevino must sing either immediately before or immediately after Nelson sings.

Williams must sing third.

5. If McIntyre is to sing immediately before Strapp sings, Trevino can sing

- (A) second
- (B) fourth
- (C) sixth
- (D) seventh

6. If McIntyre is to sing fourth, which of the following must be true?

- (A) Harris sings at some time before Strapp sings.
- (B) Jones sings at some time before Trevino sings.
- (C) Nelson sings at some time before McIntyre sings.
- (D) Strapp sings at some time before Williams sings.



## Keys

1) 1, 2

2) 4, 5

3) C

4) A

5) A

6) D