

NOVEMBER 1998

## PROVINCIAL EXAMINATION

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

# ENGLISH 12

### GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

1. Insert the stickers with your Student I.D. Number (PEN) in the allotted spaces above and on the **back** cover of this booklet. **Under no circumstance is your name or identification, other than your Student I.D. Number, to appear on this booklet.**
2. Ensure that in addition to this examination booklet, you have a **Readings Booklet** and an **Examination Response Form**. Follow the directions on the front of the Response Form.
3. **Disqualification** from the examination will result if you bring books, paper, notes or unauthorized electronic devices into the examination room.
4. All multiple-choice answers must be entered on the Response Form using an **HB pencil**. Multiple-choice answers entered in this examination booklet will **not** be marked.
5. For each of the written-response questions, write your answer in **ink** in the space provided in this booklet.
6. When instructed to open this booklet, **check the numbering of the pages** to ensure that they are numbered in sequence from page one to the last page, which is identified by

**END OF EXAMINATION**.

7. At the end of the examination, place your Response Form inside the front cover of this booklet and return the booklet and your Response Form to the supervisor.

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## ENGLISH 12 PROVINCIAL EXAMINATION

- |  | Value                   | Suggested Time     |
|--|-------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. This examination consists of <b>five</b> parts: |                         |                    |
| PART A: Editing Skills                             | 10                      | 10                 |
| PART B: Reading Comprehension                      | 21                      | 35                 |
| PART C: Poetry                                     | 20                      | 30                 |
| PART D: Prose                                      | 25                      | 50                 |
| PART E: Composition                                | 24                      | 55                 |
|  | <b>Total: 100 marks</b> | <b>180 minutes</b> |
2. Electronic devices, including dictionaries and pagers, are **not** permitted in the examination room.
3. The **Readings Booklet** contains the prose and poetry passages you will need to answer certain questions on this examination.
4. The time allotted for this examination is **three hours**. *Use your time wisely.* Adequate writing space has been provided for average-sized writing. Do not attempt to determine the length of your answers by the amount of writing space available.

**PART A: EDITING SKILLS**

**Total Value: 10 marks**

**Suggested Time: 10 minutes**

**INSTRUCTIONS:** The following passage has been divided into numbered sentences which may contain problems in grammar, usage, word choice, spelling, or punctuation. One or more sentences may be correct. No sentence contains more than one error.

If you find an error, select the underlined part that must be changed in order to make the sentence correct and record your choice on the Response Form provided. Using an HB pencil, completely fill in the circle that corresponds to your answer. If there is no error, completely fill in circle D (no error).

**AIR TRAVEL IN BRITISH COLUMBIA**

1. The airline system in British Columbia, which extends from Victoria to  
(A)  
Fort Nelson, is definitely one of Canadas most comprehensive airline services. (D) no error  
(B) (C)
2. The province is currently served by two major airlines, each with its own excellent  
(A)  
service and safety record, their ticket prices are also comparable. (D) no error  
(B) (C)
3. One of the airlines even provide a heli-jet service from Vancouver to Victoria  
(A)  
for those business customers in need of a quick flight. (D) no error  
(B) (C)
4. Both airlines also offer reliable “medi-vac” service for British Columbians needing  
(A) (B)  
emergency medical treatment and to fly them to Vancouver if necessary. (D) no error  
(C)

5. Although some airports do not have lighted runways, most regions  
 (A)  
are accessible at all times during the day or night irregardless of weather conditions. (D) no error  
 (B) (C)
6. Because the airlines also have a variety of aircraft available. One can fly safely  
 (A) (B)  
 almost anywhere in relative comfort. (D) no error  
 (C)
7. Tourists flying anywhere over the province cannot help but be effected by the  
 (A) (B)  
 spectacular landscape they see below them. (D) no error  
 (C)
8. According to pilot Pat Kelly, "Flying in BC is a scenic experience. Soaring over  
 (A) (B)  
 the mountains with their snowcapped peaks is always a treat I look forward to." (D) no error  
 (C)
9. Those frequent flyers who experience some turbulence during winter flights  
 (A)  
realize its something that is part of flying in mountainous terrain. (D) no error  
 (B) (C)
10. The airlines currently provide the province with a very satisfactory  
 (A)  
service, moreover, they continue to improve their schedules each year. (D) no error  
 (B) (C)

**OVER**

## PART B: READING COMPREHENSION

Total Value: 21 marks

Suggested Time: 35 minutes

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Read “Bugs of Wonder” on pages 1 to 3 in the **Readings Booklet**. For each question, select the **best** answer and record your choice on the Response Form provided.

11. As used in paragraph 2, the word “resilience” means the power to
- A. resist heat.
  - B. spread out.
  - C. reside quietly.
  - D. recover strength.
12. Because of the new discovery, the name “Dead Sea” in paragraph 5 could now be considered
- A. ironic.
  - B. historic.
  - C. sarcastic.
  - D. simplistic.
13. Paragraph 7 suggests that
- A. microbes were discovered in an earthquake.
  - B. the microbes are affecting the roots of the tree.
  - C. new discoveries are being made about microbes.
  - D. there is evidence of microbes originating in space.
14. In paragraphs 14 and 15, Patrick Dennis, the biochemist, indicates that
- A. microbes are plentiful.
  - B. microbes are invisible.
  - C. polar bears are important.
  - D. spotted owls are nearly extinct.
15. According to paragraph 17, which of the following are found in only the top layer of the sea?
- A. fungi
  - B. archaea
  - C. bacteria
  - D. phytoplankton

16. In paragraph 22, the word “innocuous” means
- A. foreign.
  - B. harmless.
  - C. minuscule.
  - D. dangerous.
17. According to paragraph 31, one reason why microbes may prove to be helpful in industrial processes is that they can
- A. change their shape.
  - B. hold molecules apart.
  - C. build chemical bridges.
  - D. survive high temperatures.
18. The hypothesis implied in paragraph 34 is that microbes
- A. are meteorites.
  - B. have come from space.
  - C. are used as biochemical tools.
  - D. are used by extraterrestrial life.
19. Which of the following paragraphs best expresses the main idea of the entire passage?
- A. paragraph 23
  - B. paragraph 24
  - C. paragraph 27
  - D. paragraph 29
20. The style of language used in this passage is primarily **QUESTION DELETED**
- A. formal.
  - B. archaic.
  - C. informal.
  - D. regional slang.
21. The title of the passage suggests that microbes are
- A. curious.
  - B. surprising.
  - C. widespread.
  - D. supernatural.

**Bugs of Wonder**  
(pages 1 to 3 in the **Readings Booklet**)

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Use the space provided in this booklet for written-response questions. Write your answers in **ink**. You may quote **or** paraphrase. Complete sentences are **not** required in this section.

1. From paragraphs 9 to 11, list **four** ways in which microbes contributed to the shaping of the planet.

a) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (1 mark)

b) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (1 mark)

c) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (1 mark)

d) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (1 mark)

2. In paragraph 14, Dennis refers to polar bears and spotted owls as “bit players” compared to microbes. From paragraphs 14 to 19, give **two** reasons that support this idea.

a) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (1 mark)

b) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (1 mark)



3. From paragraphs 22 to 27, list **two** similarities and **two** differences that exist between archaea and bacteria.

Similarity 1: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (1 mark)

Similarity 2: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (1 mark)

Difference 1: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (1 mark)

Difference 2: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (1 mark)

## PART C: POETRY

Total Value: 20 marks

Suggested Time: 30 minutes

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Read the poem “Snowy Owl After Midnight” on pages 4 and 5 in the **Readings Booklet**. For each question, select the **best** answer and record your choice on the Response Form provided.

22. In line 21, the words “privy to a ritual strange” suggest the speaker is
- A. resented by the owl.
  - B. searching for solitude.
  - C. allowed into the owl’s world.
  - D. seeking peaceful surroundings.
23. Line 23, “now I’m not so sure,” suggests
- A. the owl followed the speaker.
  - B. animals are watching the speaker.
  - C. the speaker doubts the owl was hunting.
  - D. the speaker doubts the wildness of the owl.
24. Lines 25 to 27, “he wings above my shoulder / quick and small as those moons / we watched in childhood,” contain an example of
- A. irony.
  - B. simile.
  - C. repetition.
  - D. end rhyme.
25. Line 29, “those moons that always raced us home,” contains an example of
- A. paradox.
  - B. oxymoron.
  - C. synecdoche.
  - D. personification.
26. In line 43, the words “Under these drumming wings” contain an example of
- A. alliteration.
  - B. dissonance.
  - C. apostrophe.
  - D. onomatopoeia.

27. In line 45, the words “my clipped, pale hands” suggest
- A. a contrast to the owl’s talons.
  - B. the speaker fears the owl’s talons.
  - C. a comparison of hunters’ weapons.
  - D. the speaker intends to hurt the owl.
28. In line 55, the words “your vigil burns white fire in the trees” contain an example of
- A. allusion.
  - B. metaphor.
  - C. hyperbole.
  - D. understatement.
29. The attitude of the speaker towards the owl is
- A. hostile.
  - B. fearful.
  - C. mocking.
  - D. respectful.

**Snowy Owl After Midnight**  
(pages 4 and 5 in the **Readings Booklet**)

**INSTRUCTIONS:** In paragraph form, answer questions 4 and 5 in the space provided. Write in **ink**. The mark for your answer will be based on the appropriateness of the example(s) you use as well as the adequacy of your explanation and the quality of your written expression.

4. In paragraph form and with reference to the poem, describe the character that the speaker believes the owl to have. **(6 marks)**

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5. In paragraph form and with reference to the poem, show that the speaker feels closely connected to the owl. **(6 marks)**

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**PART D: PROSE**

**Total Value: 25 marks**

**Suggested Time: 50 minutes**

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Read the story entitled “The Bedquilt” on pages 6 to 10 in the **Readings Booklet**. For each question, select the **best** answer and record your choice on the Response Form provided.

30. In paragraph 3, the word “incessantly” means
- A. quietly.
  - B. dutifully.
  - C. haltingly.
  - D. continuously.
31. In paragraph 7, the phrase “innocent guile” implies that Mehetabel
- A. was afraid of Sophia.
  - B. frequently manipulated Sophia.
  - C. knew when to approach Sophia.
  - D. often experienced Sophia’s temper.
32. Aunt Mehetabel accepted the treatment she received from her brother’s family because she
- A. had never known any different life.
  - B. resented her position in the household.
  - C. did not realize how poorly they treated her.
  - D. was too shy to have ever wished for a life of her own.
33. Paragraph 29 contains the stylistic device of
- A. exaggeration.
  - B. understatement.
  - C. run-on sentences.
  - D. parallel structure.
34. In paragraph 31, Mehetabel’s words, “I’d be ashamed to tell you what they said” suggest the women at the fair were
- A. critical.
  - B. envious.
  - C. friendly.
  - D. complimentary.

35. Aunt Mehetabel did not look at any other exhibits at the County Fair because she was
- A. afraid she would get lost.
  - B. unwilling to leave her quilt.
  - C. too shy to meet other people.
  - D. too tired to walk to the other exhibits.
36. The point of view of this story is
- A. objective.
  - B. omniscient.
  - C. first person.
  - D. limited omniscient.







8. In paragraph form and with reference to the story, discuss the quilt as a symbol in the story.  
**(6 marks)**

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## PART E: COMPOSITION

Total Value: 24 marks

Suggested Time: 55 minutes

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Using standard English, write a coherent, unified, multi-paragraph composition of 300-500 words on the **topic** below. In your composition, you may apply any effective and appropriate method of development which includes **any combination** of exposition, persuasion, description, and narration.

Use the page headed **Organization and Planning** for your rough work. Write your composition in **ink** on the pages headed **Finished Work**.

9. Write a multi-paragraph composition on the topic below. Your response may draw upon any aspect of your life: your reading, your own experiences, the experiences of others, and so on.

**Topic: Uncertainty**

**OVER**

## **Organization and Planning**





**FINISHED WORK**

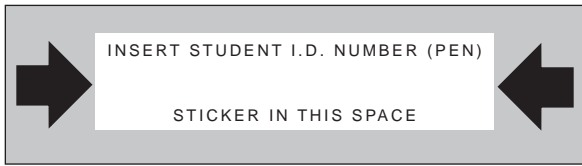
Lined area for recording work.

**OVER**









# **ENGLISH 12**

**November 1998**

Course Code = EN

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

**ENGLISH 12**

**November 1998**

Course Code = EN

Score for  
Question 1:

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
(4)

Score for  
Question 8:

8. \_\_\_\_\_  
(6)

Score for  
Question 2:

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
(2)

Score for  
Question 9:

9. \_\_\_\_\_  
(24)

Score for  
Question 3:

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
(4)

Score for  
Question 4:

4. \_\_\_\_\_  
(6)

Score for  
Question 5:

5. \_\_\_\_\_  
(6)

Score for  
Question 6:

6. \_\_\_\_\_  
(6)

Score for  
Question 7:

7. \_\_\_\_\_  
(6)

**ENGLISH 12**  
**READINGS BOOKLET**  
**NOVEMBER 1998**

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## PART B: READING COMPREHENSION

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Read the following passage and answer the questions on pages 4 to 7 of the examination booklet.

Adapted from **Bugs of Wonder**

by Margaret Munro

- 1 One lives in a solution so salty it would make you gag. Another thrives at temperatures hot enough to kill most other living things. “They’re perfectly happy,” says biochemist Patrick Dennis of the microbes in a toasty 80-degree Celsius vat in his University of BC lab.
- 2 The heat-loving microscopic organisms, like their salt-loving cousins in a flask down the hall, are some of the stranger members of the ever-expanding microbial family that is shaking up long-held assumptions about life, its origin and its resilience.
- 3 “We’re starting to see microbes in places that are just unbelievable,” says UBC microbiologist Bob Hancock, rattling off some of the improbable locales. “They seem to defy just about everything we know about life.”
- 4 Tiny organisms have been found laying down gold deposits in South America; surviving on a diet of basalt rock several kilometres underground in Sweden; residing in scalding deep-sea vents off the BC and Washington coast; living on frigid rocks in the Antarctic.
- 5 They’ve “put the lie” to the name of the Dead Sea, which scientists now realize can teem with invisible life. Microbes may even be growing on distant planets, according to geophysicists studying tantalizing signs of life on a meteorite from Mars.
- 6 It’s possible—but impossible to prove without a better extraterrestrial sample—that life on Earth started when contaminated dust or rock dropped in from space. Such microscopic aliens may, according to evolutionary biologists, have planted the microbial seeds that over the eons branched into the tree of life found on Earth today.
- 7 Even without such space invaders, the tree has recently been shaken to its roots.
- 8 A vast family of new microorganisms, which has been named archaea, has been found living in everything from the backyard garden to the deep sea floor. Archaea are so different from bacteria that biologists have decided they deserve their own branch on the tree of life.
- 9 Scientists are also realizing just how critical a role microbes played in shaping the planet: they gave the atmosphere its oxygen two billion years ago; they were critical to the formation of the biosphere; they helped shape many energy and mineral deposits by concentrating everything from gold to oil.
- 10 A Canadian team has concluded that microbial handiwork laid down the famed Serra Pelada gold field in the Amazon jungle. The scientists say the rich lode—more than 100 tonnes—was produced not by the accepted mechanisms of ore formation but by swarms of microbes that over millions of years concentrated the gold from jungle soils and rivers and rocks.

**OVER**

- 11 Researchers are also digging up piles of evidence—such as deposits packed with strings of tiny crystals that microbes strung together like tiny diamonds—that microorganisms helped lay down many of the world deposits of carbonates, phosphates, oxides and sulphides.
- 12 “It is really very obvious there is a strong link between geoscience and microbiology,” says Hojatollah Vali, a bio-mineralization specialist at McGill University and a member of the NASA team that analysed signs of microbial life on the Mars meteorite earlier this year.
- 13 As biologists like to point out, the life that’s invisible to the naked eye remains one of the most important forms of life on the planet.
- 14 Polar bears and spotted owls may be environmental darlings. But as UBC’s Dennis puts it, they’re “bit players.” It’s microbes that dominate life on earth.
- 15 Though incredibly small, he notes that they’re also incredibly common.
- 16 “They’re everywhere,” says Dennis.
- 17 Each millilitre of sea water contains as many as 10 million single-celled organisms. Up to half of them may belong to the recently discovered microbial family, archaea. Unlike phytoplankton that live on in the sea’s top layer, archaea and bacteria are found from the top to the bottom of the sea.
- 18 This is why some scientists—Dennis among them—figure microbes are the most common form of life on the planet.
- 19 “They’re major players in terms of biomass,” Dennis says. “Yet we have relatively little understanding of what they’re doing.”
- 20 “They’re turning out to be far more diverse and complex than we expected,” adds Rosie Redfield, a UBC microbiologist who, like Dennis, is part of the evolutionary biology team put together by the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research.
- 21 “We know so little about the biology around us,” says Redfield, who marvels over the way knowledge about microbes is “just exploding.”
- 22 Until recently most bacteria and archaea have been ignored because they’re as innocuous as they are ubiquitous: they don’t cause disease and death. Most are difficult to grow in a laboratory.
- 23 “Only one per cent of the microbes found in sea water will grow in culture,” Dennis says.
- 24 The recent discovery of microbes in so many unexpected places, coupled with the advent of gene-analysing techniques, has enabled scientists to realize how diverse the microbial world is.
- 25 Archaea, for example, look like run-of-the-mill bacteria under the microscope. In fact, scientists thought for years they were bacteria. Only after genetic inspection did scientists realize they were a distinct breed of life.
- 26 Archaea employ very different and more sophisticated biochemical processes than bacteria do, and followed an evolutionary path all their own. To get a better read on what sets them apart, Dennis’s UBC team has been breaking down two strains of archaea to molecular pieces.

- 27 One thrives in a high-salt environment that would literally suck life out of other life forms. These microbes occur around the world in salt ponds and other high-salt environments, including the Dead Sea. They've even been found inside salt crystals in British salt mines.
- 28 The other microbe they are dissecting is a heat-lover known as *sulfolobus*. It is common in hot springs, geysers and deep-sea vents, where temperatures can hit 350 degrees Celsius.
- 29 The UBC work is part of an international research effort to define the chemical tricks the microbes use to survive in extreme environments.
- 30 Powerful chemical bridges are built into the microbes' proteins to hold the molecules together. This allows the proteins, which include enzymes and other chemical workhorses, to maintain their shape and function in heat and salt that would destroy the flimsier proteins common to other microbes.
- 31 There are plenty of practical applications for the tough molecules. Some enzymes from heat-loving archaea have already been put to work in genetic engineering machines, where they copy and splice together genetic molecules. And they may prove valuable in industrial processes that require high heat.
- 32 There is speculation that organisms in the archaea family are the closest remaining descendants of Earth's earliest life forms. That is because so many of the microbes thrive in extreme environments that might have been common when primordial stew swirled around the planet.
- 33 Dennis says recent speculation that microbes lived on Mars once again raises the possibility that life on Earth was seeded from space. It's clear from biochemicals found in everything from archaea to humans that all life on Earth shares common ancestors: proteins, genes and nucleic acid on Earth all use the same building blocks. And life on other planets could use the same chemicals. But without an extraterrestrial sample, the question will remain unanswered.
- 34 While the scientists have used every possible tool at their disposal to prove the meteorite was once inhabited by Martian microbes, Vali says the evidence remains suggestive but inconclusive. "We don't have the proof yet."



## PART C: POETRY

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Read the following poem and answer the questions on pages 8 to 11 of the examination booklet.

### Snowy Owl After Midnight

by Tim Bowling

1 I like to believe he waits for me  
in the dark pines along the river,  
eyes trained on the porchlight  
of my house;

5 I like to believe his blood stirs  
at my presence, in a way unknown  
to him, but that he also understands  
the heightened smell of joy and fear  
my bones give off

10 as I shut the door behind me  
and plunge into the stars.

It is so quiet at this hour,  
just the two of us awake,  
each hunting in his way

15 the small gifts of the night,  
what he seeks in the long grass  
and marshes, what I seek  
in the soft, unpeopled silence:  
at first I thought I followed him

20 along the dyke and through the fields,  
privy to a ritual strange and  
wild in its solitude;  
now I'm not so sure.

For miles

25 he wings above my shoulder  
quick and small as those moons  
we watched in childhood  
from the backseats of our parents' cars,  
those moons that always raced us home,

30 that we could never lose

and when I stop, he's there,  
settling on a fence-post or piling,  
diving behind a clump of trees;  
never a shriek from the grass  
35 never a word from my throat;  
we have circled each other's silence  
this way for months.

Again, tonight, I wonder  
what he would tell me if he could;  
40 would he say the blood that calls him  
to the earth is a blood  
he does not understand?  
Under these drumming wings I wonder  
what death does he expect  
45 my clipped, pale hands to make?

I would say to him now,  
this blank page riffling in the night,  
this beating heart of a snowman  
extant from some boyish dream,  
50 brother, I have stopped my ears against  
the blood that calls me to the earth  
but I will move here with you  
in its dark and silent flowing  
as long as breath is given  
55 and your vigil burns white fire in the trees.

## PART D: PROSE

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Read the following selection and answer the questions on pages 12 to 16 of the examination booklet.

Adapted from **The Bedquilt**

by Dorothy Canfield Fisher

- 1 Of all the Elwell family Aunt Mehetabel was certainly the most unimportant member. It was in the old-time New England days, when an unmarried woman was an old maid at twenty, at forty was everyone's servant, and at sixty had gone through so much discipline that she could need no more in the next world. Aunt Mehetabel was sixty-eight.
- 2 She had never for a moment known the pleasure of being important to anyone. Not that she was useless in her brother's family; she was expected, as a matter of course, to take upon herself the most tedious and uninteresting part of the household labours. On Mondays she accepted as her share the washing of the men's shirts, heavy with sweat and stiff with dirt from the fields and from their own hardworking bodies. Tuesdays she never dreamed of being allowed to iron anything pretty or even interesting, like the baby's white dresses or the fancy aprons of her young lady nieces. She stood all day pressing out a monotonous succession of dish cloths and towels and sheets.
- 3 In preserving-time she was allowed to have none of the pleasant responsibility of deciding when the fruit had cooked long enough, nor did she share in the little excitement of pouring the sweet-smelling stuff into stone jars. She sat in a corner with the children and stoned cherries incessantly, or hulled strawberries until her fingers were dyed red.
- 4 The Elwells were not consciously unkind to their aunt, they were even in a vague way fond of her; but she was so insignificant a figure in their lives that she was almost invisible to them. Aunt Mehetabel did not resent this treatment; she took it quite as unconsciously as they gave it. She gathered what crumbs of comfort she could from their occasional careless kindnesses and tried to hide the hurt which, even yet, pierced her at her brother's rough joking.
- 5 Her sister-in law, a big hearty housewife, who ruled indoors with as autocratic a sway as did her husband on the farm, was rather kind in an absent, offhand way to the shrunken little old woman, and it was through her that Mehetabel was able to enjoy the one pleasure of her life. Even as a girl she had been clever with her needle in the way of patching bedquilts. During years of devotion to this one art she had accumulated a considerable store of quilting patterns. Sometimes the neighbours would send over and ask "Miss Mehetabel" for the loan of her sheaf-of-wheat design, or the double-star pattern.
- 6 She never knew how her great idea came to her. Sometimes she thought she must have dreamed it, sometimes she even wondered reverently, in the phraseology of the weekly prayer meeting, if it had not been "sent" to her. She never admitted to herself that she could have thought of it without other help. It was too great, too ambitious, too lofty a project for her humble mind to have conceived. Even when she finished drawing the design with her own fingers, she gazed at it incredulously, not daring to believe that it could indeed be her handiwork. At first it seemed to her only like a lovely but unreal dream. For a long time she did not once think of putting an actual quilt together following that pattern, even though she herself had invented it.

- 7 She dared do nothing in the household where she was a dependent, without asking permission. With a heart full of hope and fear thumping furiously against her old ribs, she approached the mistress of the house on churning-day, knowing with the innocent guile of a child that the countrywoman was apt to be in a good temper while working over the fragrant butter in the cool cellar.
- 8 Sophia listened absently to her sister-in-law's halting petition. "Why, yes, Mehetabel," she said, "start another quilt if you want to. I've got a lot of pieces from the spring sewing that will work in real good." Mehetabel tried honestly to make her see that this would be no common quilt. At last Sophia said, with a kindly impatience: "Oh, there! Don't bother me. I never could keep track of your quiltin' patterns, anyhow. I don't care what pattern you go by."
- 9 Mehetabel rushed back up the steep attic stairs to her room, and in a joyful agitation began preparations for the work of her life. Her very first stitches showed her that it was even better than she hoped. By some heaven-sent inspiration she had invented a pattern beyond which no patchwork quilt could go.
- 10 She had but little time during the daylight hours filled with the incessant household drudgery. After dark she did not dare to sit up late at night lest she burn too much candle. It was weeks before the little square began to show the pattern.
- 11 Every time she opened the door, no matter what weather hung outside the small window, she always saw the little room flooded with sunshine. She smiled to herself as she bent over the innumerable scraps of cotton cloth on her work table. Already—to her—they were arranged in orderly, complex, mosaic-beauty.
- 12 Finally she could wait no longer, and one evening ventured to bring her work down beside the fire where the family sat. As she stood, the square fell from her trembling old hands and fluttered to the table. Sophia glanced at it carelessly. "Is that the new quilt you said you wanted to start?" she asked, yawning. "Looks like a real pretty pattern. Let's see it."
- 13 "Land's sakes!" cried her sister-in-law. "Why, Mehetabel Elwell, where did you git that pattern?"
- 14 "I made it up," said Mehetabel. She spoke quietly but she was trembling.
- 15 "No!" exclaimed Sophia. "Did you! Why, I never did see such a pattern in my life. Girls, come here and see what your Aunt Mehetabel is doing."
- 16 The girls looked at it right side, wrong side, and echoed their mother's exclamations. Mr. Elwell himself came over to see what they were discussing. "Well, I declare!" he said, looking at his sister with eyes more approving than she could ever remember. "I don't know a thing about patchwork quilts, but to my eye that beats old Mis' Andrew's quilt that got the blue ribbon so many times at the County Fair."
- 17 As she lay that night in her narrow hard bed, too proud, too excited to sleep, Mehetabel's heart swelled and tears of joy ran down from her old eyes.
- 18 The next day her sister-in-law astonished her by taking the huge pan of potatoes out of her lap and setting one of the younger children to peeling them. "Don't you want to go on with that quiltin' pattern?" she said. "I'd kind o' like to see how you're goin' to make the grapevine design come out on the corner."

**OVER**

- 19 For the first time in her life the dependent old maid contradicted her powerful sister-in-law. Quickly and jealously she said, “It’s not a grapevine. It’s a sort of curlicue I made up.”
- 20 “Well, it’s nice looking anyhow,” said Sophia pacifyingly. “I never could have made it up.”
- 21 By the end of the summer the family interest had risen so high that Mehetabel was given for herself a little round table in the sitting room, for *her*, where she could keep her pieces and use odd minutes for her work. She almost wept over such kindness and resolved firmly not to take advantage of it. She went on faithfully with her monotonous housework, not neglecting a corner. But the atmosphere of her world was changed. Now things had a meaning. Through the longest task of washing milk-pans, there rose a rainbow of promise.
- 22 A year went by and a quarter of the quilt was finished. A second year passed and half was done. The third year Mehetabel had pneumonia and lay ill for weeks and weeks, horrified by the idea that she might die before her work was completed. A fourth year and one could really see the grandeur of the whole design. In September of the fifth year, the entire family gathered around her to watch eagerly, as Mehetabel quilted the last stitches. The girls held it up by the four corners and they all looked at it in hushed silence.
- 23 Then Mr. Elwell cried as one speaking with authority, “By ginger! That’s goin’ to the County Fair!”
- 24 Even in her pride Mehetabel felt a pang as the bulky package was carried out of the house. As the days went on she felt lost. For years it had been her one thought. The little round stand had been heaped with a litter of bright-coloured scraps. Now it was desolately bare. She drooped. The family noticed it. One day Sophia said kindly, “You feel sort o’ lost without the quilt, don’t you Mehetabel?”
- 25 “They took it away so quick!” she said wistfully. “I hadn’t hardly had one good look at it myself.”
- 26 The fair was to last a fortnight. At the beginning of the second week Mr. Elwell asked his sister how early she could get up in the morning.
- 27 “I dunno. Why?” she asked.
- 28 “Well, Thomas Ralston has got to drive to West Oldton to see a lawyer. That’s four miles beyond the Fair. He says if you can git up so’s to leave here at four in the morning he’ll drive you to the Fair, leave you there for the day, and bring you back again at night.” Mehetabel’s face turned very white. Her eyes filled with tears. It was as though someone had offered her a ride in a golden chariot up to the gates of heaven. “Why, you can’t *mean* it!” she cried wildly. Her brother laughed. He could not meet her eyes. Even to his easy-going unimaginative indifference to his sister this was a revelation of the narrowness of her life in his home. “Oh, ’tain’t so much—just to go to the Fair,” he told her in some confusion, and then “Yes, sure I mean it. Go git your things ready, for it’s tomorrow morning he wants to start.”
- 29 A trembling, excited old woman stared all that night at the rafters. She who had never been more than six miles from home—it was to her like going into another world. She who had never seen anything more exciting than a church supper was to see the County Fair. She who had never dreamed of doing it. She could not at all imagine what it would be like.

- 30 The next morning all the family rose early to see her off. The buggy drove up to the door, and she was helped in. The family ran to and fro with blankets, woolen tippet, a hot soapstone from the kitchen range. Her wraps were tucked about her. They all stood together and waved goodbye as she drove out of the yard. She waved back, but she scarcely saw them. On her return home that evening she was ashy pale, and so stiff that her brother had to lift her out bodily. But her lips were set in a blissful smile. They crowded around her with questions until Sophia pushed them all aside. She told them Aunt Mehetabel was too tired to speak until she had had her supper. The young people held their tongues while she drank her tea, and absentmindedly ate a scrap of toast with an egg. Then the old woman was helped into an easy chair before the fire. They gathered around her, eager for news of the great world, and Sophia said, "Now, come, Mehetabel, tell us all about it!"
- 31 Mehetabel drew a long breath. "It was just perfect!" she said. "Finer even than I thought. They've got it hanging up in the very middle of a sort o' closet made of glass, and one of the lower corners is ripped and turned back so's to show the seams on the wrong side. There are a whole lot of other ones in that room, but not one that can hold a candle to it. I heard lots of people say the same thing. You ought to have heard what the women said about that corner, Sophia. They said—well, I'd be ashamed *to tell you* what they said. I declare if I wouldn't!"
- 32 Mr. Elwell asked, "What did you think of that big ox we've heard so much about?"
- 33 "I didn't look at the stock," returned his sister indifferently. She turned to one of her nieces. "That set of pieces you gave me, Maria, from your red waist, come out just lovely! I heard one woman say you could 'most smell the red roses."
- 34 "How did Jed Burgess' bay horse place in the mile trot?" asked Thomas.
- 35 "I didn't see the races."
- 36 "How about the preserves?" asked Sophia.
- 37 "I didn't see the preserves," said Mehetabel calmly.
- 38 Seeing that they were gazing at her with astonished faces she went on, to give them a reasonable explanation, "You see, I went right to the room where the quilt was, and then I didn't want to leave it. It had been so long since I'd seen it. I had to look at it first real good myself, and then I looked at the others to see if there was any that could come up to it. Then the people begun comin' in and I got so interested in hearin' what they had to say I couldn't think of goin' anywheres else. I ate my lunch right there too, and I'm glad as can be I did, too; for what do you think?"—she gazed about her with kindling eyes. "While I stood there with a sandwich in one hand, didn't the head of the whole concern come in and open the glass door and pin a big bow of blue ribbon right in the middle of the quilt with a label on it, 'First Prize'."
- 39 There was a stir of proud congratulation. Then Sophia returned to questioning, "Didn't you go to see anything else?"
- 40 "Why, no," said Mehetabel. "Only the quilt. Why should I?"

**OVER**

- 41 She fell into a reverie. As if it hung again before her eyes she saw the glory that shone around the creation of her hand and brain. She longed to make her listeners share the golden vision with her. She struggled for words. She fumbled blindly for unknown superlatives. “I tell you it looked like—” she began, and paused.
- 42 Vague recollections of hymnbook phrases came into her mind. They were the only kind of poetic expression she knew. But they were dismissed as being sacrilegious to use for something in real life. Also as not being nearly striking enough.
- 43 Finally, “I tell you it looked real good,” she assured them and sat staring into the fire, on her tired old face the supreme content of an artist who has realized her ideal.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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