

PART B: READING COMPREHENSION
SYNTHESIS TEXT 1

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the following excerpt from “Circus in Town,” and answer the multiple-choice questions. For each question, select the **best** answer and record your choice on the **Answer Sheet** provided.

**Canadian author Sinclair Ross was writing during the Depression in the 1930s.
In his fiction, he reveals the difficulties of farming life on the Prairies.**

adapted from **Circus in Town**

by Sinclair Ross

- 1 It was Jenny’s first circus. A girl in purple tights, erect on a galloping horse, a red-coated brass band, a clown, an elephant ripped through the middle. “And did you see the elephant?” she asked her brother Tom, who had found the piece of poster in the street when he was in town marketing the butter and eggs. “Was it really there? And the clown?”
- 2 But the ecstatic, eleven-year-old quiver in her voice, and the way she pirouetted on her bare toes as he led the horse out of the buggy shafts, made him feel that perhaps in picking up the poster he had been unworthy of his own seventeen years; so with an offhand shrug he drawled, “Everybody said it wouldn’t amount to much. A few ponies and an elephant or two—but what’s an elephant?”
- 3 She wheeled from him, resenting his attempt to scoff away such wonders. The bit of poster had spun a new world before her, excited her, given wild, soaring impetus to her imagination; and now, without in the least understanding herself, she wanted the excitement and the soaring, even though it might stab and rack her.
- 4 It was supper-time, her father just in from the field and turning the horses loose at the water-trough, so off she sped to greet him, her bare legs flashing, her throat too tight to cry out, passionate to communicate her excitement, to find response.
- 5 But the skittish old roan Billie took fright at the fluttering poster, and her father shouted for her to watch what she was doing and keep away from the horses. For a minute she stood quite still, cold, impaled by the rebuff; then again she wheeled, and, as swiftly as before, ran to the house.
- 6 A wave of dark heat, hotter than the summer heat, struck her at the door. “Look—” she pierced it shrilly— “what Tom brought me—a circus,” and with the poster outstretched she sprang to the stove where her mother was frying pork.
- 7 There was no rebuff this time. Instead, an incredible kind of pity—pity of all things on a day like this. “Never mind, Jenny.” A hot hand gentle on her cheek a minute. “Your day’s going to come. You won’t spend all your life among chickens and cows or I’m not the woman I think I am!” And then, bewilderingly, an angry clatter of stovelids that made her shrink away dismayed, in sudden dread of her father’s coming and the storm that was to break.

- 8 Not a word until he had washed and was sitting down at the table. Then as the platters were clumped in front of him he asked, “What’s wrong?” and for answer her mother hurled back, “Wrong? You—and the farm—and the debts—that’s what’s wrong. There’s a circus in town, but do we go? Do we ever go anywhere? Other children have things, and see things, and enjoy themselves, but look, look at it! That’s how much of the circus *my* girl gets!”
- 9 Jenny dared to be a little indignant at the scornful way her mother pointed to the piece of poster. A beautiful poster—a band and half an elephant—and she felt exasperated and guilty that there should be a quarrel about it, her father looking so frightened and foolish, her mother so savage and red.
- 10 But even had she been bold enough to attempt an explanation it would have been lost in the din of their voices. Her mother shouted about working her fingers to the bone and nothing for it but skimping and debts. She didn’t mind for herself but she wanted Jenny to have a chance. “Look at her clothes and her bare feet! Your own daughter! Why don’t you take hold—do something? Nothing ahead of her but chickens and cows! Another ten years—can’t you just see the big, gawky know-nothing she’s going to be?”
- 11 Jenny gulped, startled. Ten years from now it was a quite different kind of young lady she intended to be. For a moment there was a sick little ball of consternation down near her midriff, a clammy fear her mother might be right—and then she was furious. She wasn’t gawky and she wasn’t know-nothing. She was farther on in school than any other girl her age. She could do fractions and percentages and draw the map of North America with her eyes shut. Her mother to talk, who only last Sunday when she was writing a letter had to ask how to spell ‘necessary’!
- 12 But suddenly the din between her mother and father split apart, and it was Tom speaking. Tom unruffled and magisterial, rising to his seventeen years and the incumbency of maintaining adult dignity at their table. “Can’t you hold on and let us eat in peace? We’ve heard all that before.”
- 13 Jenny shivered, it was so fine and brave of Tom.
- 14 “Come on, Jenny, you’re not eating anyway. We’ll go out and leave them to it.”
- 15 It was dangerous, she thought swiftly—parents weren’t to be flouted—but she couldn’t help herself. Her pride in Tom was uncontrollable, mastering her discretion. Eyes down, bare feet padding quick and silent, she followed him.
- 16 They walked gravely across the yard and sat down on the edge of the water-trough. “It’s too bad all right you couldn’t go to the circus,” Tom consoled her, “but everybody said it wouldn’t be worth the money.”
- 17 She glanced up puzzled, impatient. Pity again! If only they would just keep quiet and leave her alone—join her, if they liked, to see the circus.
- 18 There was a sudden dilation of life within her, of the world around her—an elephant, a brass band in red coats, half a poster blown from a billboard—and to recapture the moment was all she wanted, to scale the glamour and wonder of it, slowly, exquisitely, to feel herself unfurl.

- 19 “There’s Dad now, starting for the barn,” Tom nudged her. “Better go and finish your supper. I don’t want any more.”
- 20 Neither did she, but to escape him she went. Uneasily, apprehensive that when she was alone with her mother there might be a reckoning for her having taken sides with Tom. And she was afraid of her mother tonight. Afraid because all at once she felt defenseless, perishable. This sudden dilation of life—it was like a bubble blown vast and fragile. In time it might subside, slowly, safely, or it might even remain full-blown, gradually strengthening itself, gradually building up the filmy tissues to make its vastness durable, but tonight she was afraid. Afraid that before the hack of her mother’s voice it might burst and crumple.
- 21 So when she found the kitchen deserted, there was a cool, isolated moment of relief, and then a furtive pose, an alert, blind instinct for survival and escape. She glided across the kitchen, took down the poster from where it still hung over the calendar, and fled with it to the barn.
- 22 There was a side door, and near it a ladder to the loft. No one saw her. She lay limp in the hay, listening to her heart-beat subside. It was a big, solemn loft, with gloom and fragrance and sparrows chattering against its vault of silence. And there, in its dim, high stillness, she had her circus. Not the kind that would stop off at a little town. Not just a tent and an elephant or two. No—for this was her own circus; the splendid, matchless circus of a little girl who had never seen one.
- 23 “You’ll catch it,” Tom said when he found her, “hiding up here instead of helping with the dishes.”
- 24 Catch it she did, but for once the threats of what would happen next time failed to touch her. The circus went on. All night long she wore her purple tights and went riding Billie round and round the pasture in them. A young, fleet-footed Billie. Caparisoned¹ in blue and gold and scarlet, silver bells on reins and bridle—neck arched proudly to the music of the band.

¹ caparison: *a rich covering for a horse*

SYNTHESIS TEXT 2

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the following passage, “ ‘Happy’ for Sale,” and answer the multiple-choice questions. For each question, select the **best** answer and record your choice on the **Answer Sheet** provided.

The story of Chris Gardner was told in both a book and a movie. The curious spelling of ‘happy’ comes from a sign that Chris Gardner saw when he was homeless.

‘Happy’ for Sale

Fortune Magazine, September 15, 2006

by Jia Lynn Yang

- 1 In 1982, Chris Gardner was just another go-getter in the training program at Dean Witter’s San Francisco office, making \$1,000 a month. He was also homeless. Gardner couldn’t afford both day care for his 20-month-old son, whom he was raising alone, and a place to live. So for a year he and Chris Jr. slept where they could—cheap hotel rooms in West Oakland, a shelter at a church in the Tenderloin, under his office desk, even, on occasion, the bathroom at the Bay Area Rapid Transit MacArthur station. He remembered the words of his mother, Bettye Jean Triplett, another single parent, who grew up during the Depression outside Rayville, La., where slavery was still a living memory: “You can only depend on yourself. The cavalry ain’t coming.”
- 2 So Gardner worked, making 200 calls a day to snag clients for Dean Witter. “Every time I picked up the phone,” he recalls, “I knew I was getting closer to digging myself out of the hole.” Within five years he had opened his own institutional brokerage firm in Chicago called Gardner Rich, which is still thriving today. Then, in 2002, a story on local TV set in motion a series of events that will culminate this December, when a movie based on his life, “The Pursuit of Happy”, hits the theaters, with Will Smith playing the lead role.
- 3 And that is just the beginning. At 52, Gardner has a new goal: to become a household name. “Oprah did okay,” Gardner says of the woman who is clearly one of his role models. “She’s helping people, and she’s making a ton of dough.” In May he released a memoir, which has the same title as the movie; it is now No. 7 on the *Washington Post* bestseller list. He has an agent at William Morris, a literary agent at Zachary Shuster Harmsworth, a publicist with Rubenstein PR, and a speaking contract with Keppler Speakers. He and Mark Clayman, an executive producer on the movie, have also formed a company called Chris Gardner Inc. to turn him into a brand. Among their ideas: another book, a CD of songs that have inspired him, a daytime talk show, and a reality-TV show with the same folks who did MTV’s *Real World*, in which Gardner will lead a team of people into blighted neighborhoods to help families in need.
- 4 On a hot late-July day in Chicago the humidity is stifling, and at the offices of Gardner Rich, a few blocks from the Sears Tower, the star of Chris Gardner Inc. is rustling through the papers on his desk. Gardner and his 14 employees work in a two-story building that looks like a squat glass box.

- 5 The office décor is as distinctive as the boss's life story. Gardner's desk is a 12-foot-long¹ gleaming metal tail wing of a DC-10. Mounted on the wall are two life-sized plaster elephant heads. Gardner, 6-foot-3 with a graying goatee, dresses in a style both breezy and impeccable: loose-fitting white linen shirt, cornflower-blue Bermuda shorts, and leather slippers. Gardner's quirks (he wears two watches, one on each wrist, to make sure he's always on time), his people skills, and his powerful personal story do have a made-for-TV resonance to them.
- 6 Except that at this moment, as he smokes a Kool, he sighs and declares, "I'm tired of talking about myself." Right. Not only is he speaking to *Fortune* (and *Entrepreneur*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Tavis Smiley, and so on), but he has also booked 50 speaking appearances. It is only Gardner's willingness to talk about himself that makes his plans plausible. Sure, he's something of an operator. His period of homelessness—devastating at the time—has become the dramatic center to his life story, the part that makes people stop and listen. But his sincerity is also compelling. Gardner is using his personal history—plus his persistence and manifest charisma—to sell the sense of possibility that he never lost.
- 7 Born in 1954 in Wisconsin, Gardner didn't know his father growing up, and his mother was married to an abusive man. At 18, Gardner graduated from high school and joined the Navy. He worked as a medic in North Carolina, then left the service in 1974 to work at a veterans' hospital in San Francisco. One day he saw a red Ferrari and, intrigued by the beauty of the car, asked the owner what he did for a living. Stockbroker, the man replied. From that moment, Gardner determined to become one too.
- 8 In 1982 he started at the Dean Witter training program. By this time he was sharing custody of an infant son. But his girlfriend decided motherhood was not for her, and Gardner began raising his son alone. The boarding house where Gardner lived did not allow children, and he struggled to find an alternative—thus the long nights at the shelter or the BART bathroom. All the while Gardner held his job and slowly worked his way up and, by the end of 1983, into an apartment in what he calls "the ghettos of Oakland." He worked at Bear Stearns (Charts) as a broker for 3½ years before starting Gardner Rich. (There is no "Rich" at the firm, of which Gardner owns 75%. The rest is owned by a hedge fund. He picked the name because he considers Marc Rich, the commodities trader pardoned by President Clinton in 2001, "one of the most successful futures traders in the world." The two have never met.)
- 9 The brokerage firm, with assets of \$475,326 in its last financial statement, earns its revenues from commissions on trades it does for its institutional clients. Melody Hobson, president of Ariel Capital Management in Chicago, which has done business with Gardner Rich for ten years, says it is "one of the top-tier firms we use for trading."
- 10 Gardner eventually got his Ferrari but these days drives a jet-black Bentley. His son, Chris, is now 25 and trying to make his way into the music business. His daughter, Jacintha, 20, is a business student.
- 11 For all his élan—he favors bespoke suits and Maui vacations—Gardner was a low-profile success story until late 2002, when a San Francisco TV station aired a segment about his occasional volunteer work at Glide Memorial Church, where he used to stand in line for food.

¹ foot: 0.3 metre

- 12 Lynn Redmond, a television producer, saw the segment, looked up Gardner, and suggested he tell his story on ABC's newsmagazine, *20/20*. "My first reaction was, 'Why me?'" Gardner says. "I was scared to death. My position was, if you want to do a piece about someone with some houses, some money, and toys, then no. But if you want to talk about someone who tried to do something with their life, with their family, and with their community, then I'm all for it."
- 13 The show ran on Jan. 17, 2003. Watching that night was Clayman, 39, a TV-actor-turned-producer, who is now working with Gardner on other projects. In a pivotal moment, the camera crew brought Gardner and his son to the bathroom they slept in back in 1982. Standing inside, Gardner declared, "A lot of hard decisions were made right here about, 'What are you going to do with your life?'"
- 14 Fired by the idea of turning Gardner's story into a movie, Clayman showed the *20/20* clip to the producers at Escape Artists, who then sent it to Will Smith. "It made people come together and say, 'Let's go all out,'" says Todd Black of Escape Artists, which produced "The Pursuit of Happyness" (the curious spelling comes from a sign that Gardner saw when he was homeless). Gardner flew out to Smith's home in L.A. for dinner so that the actor could study him, an experience Gardner describes as "surreal." He spent as much time as he could on the set during the 59 days of shooting, though some scenes were difficult to watch.
- 15 Driving through the streets of downtown Chicago in his Bentley, Gardner reflects on
- how the story of his life has taken on a life of its own. "Look, you know what I do know? All this could be real crazy," he says. "But I do believe, with all my heart, that some of the things that I had to go through were God's way of getting me ready for what He wants me to do."
- 16 In other words, Gardner wants his story to inspire. And because he is at heart a businessman—he still runs Gardner Rich, though he has delegated much of the day-to-day management—he also has ideas on how to make money while doing it. "This one TV producer I was talking to told me, 'The next Oprah is going to be a man,'" he explains. When asked if he was the next Oprah, Gardner says cheerfully, "You never know."
- 17 People are responding to his story. A table in Gardner's office is piled six inches² high with letters—offers to speak, requests for political donations, and pleas for help from people who feel they can relate to Gardner's past. On occasion, Gardner will pick up the phone and call someone who has written in about a personal crisis. "I find myself saying over and over: 'Baby steps count. But you've always got to be moving forward,'" says Gardner, who usually limits his assistance to phone calls because he says hope is sometimes all another person needs.
- 18 The Gardner gospel of persistence, progress, and faith is spreading—and the movie's not even in theaters yet. "His life is going to change a lot from what he knows," says Black. Gardner, too, can hear the rumbling of oncoming fame. It may not be the cavalry, but something's coming.

² inch: 2.54 cm

THE GARDNER FILE

1954	Born in Wisconsin
1972	Joins U.S. Navy
1974	Moves to San Francisco
1981	Birth of son Christopher
1982	Starts training program at Dean Witter; becomes homeless
1983	Moves into apartment
1986	Birth of daughter Jacintha
1987	Starts Gardner Rich
2002	Radio station tells his story
2003	<i>20/20</i> segment airs
2006	The <i>Pursuit of Happyness</i> , book and movie

Figure 1

INSTRUCTIONS: In a multi-paragraph (3 or more paragraphs) response of at least 300 words, answer question 1 in the **Response Booklet**. Write in **ink**. Use the **Organization and Planning** space to plan your work. The mark for your answer will be based on the appropriateness of the examples you use as well as the adequacy of your explanation and the quality of your written expression.

2. Assess the role that optimism plays in the lives of Jenny in “Circus in Town” and Chris Gardner in “ ‘Happyness’ for Sale.” You must refer to **both** passages in your response.

KEY:

Both the character Jenny and entrepreneur Chris Gardner come from impoverished backgrounds and both are able to escape through the power of optimism and imagination.

“CIRCUS IN TOWN”

Despite being denied the opportunity to attend the circus and despite being caught in the middle of an argument between her parents, Jenny is able to escape through her imagination and envision a circus that is likely more fantastic and glorious than the actual event.

- “Pity again! If only they would just keep quiet and leave her alone—join her, if they liked, to see the circus.” (paragraph 17)
- “There was a sudden dilation of life within her, of the world around her—an elephant, a brass band in red coats, half a poster blown from a billboard—and to recapture the moment was all she wanted, to scale the glamour and wonder of it, slowly, exquisitely, to feel herself unfurl.” (paragraph 18)
- “And there, in its dim, high stillness, she had her circus. Not the kind that would stop off at a little town. Not just a tent and an elephant or two. No—for this was her own circus; the splendid, matchless circus of a little girl who had never seen one.” (paragraph 22)
- “The circus went on. All night long she wore her purple tights and went riding Billie round and round the pasture in them.” (paragraph 24)

“ ‘HAPPYNESS’ FOR SALE”

Despite being homeless and a single-father, Chris Gardner was able to envision the possibility of a more prosperous future and as a result, he set his goals in order to become the successful person that he is.

- “In 1982, Chris Gardner was just another go-getter in the training program at Dean Witter’s San Francisco office, making \$1000 a month. He was also homeless.” (paragraph 1)
- “He remembered the words of his mother... ‘You can only depend on yourself. The cavalry ain’t coming.’ ” (paragraph 1)
- “So Gardner worked, making 200 calls a day to snag clients for Dean Witter. ‘Every time I picked up the phone,’ he recalls, ‘I knew I was getting closer to digging myself out of the hole.’ ” (paragraph 2)
- “One day he saw a red Ferrari and, intrigued by the beauty of the car, asked the owner what he did for a living. Stockbroker, the man replied. From that moment, Gardner determined to become one too.” (paragraph 7)

Other responses are possible.

ENGLISH 12
SCORING GUIDE FOR ANALYSIS OF SYNTHESIS TEXTS 1 AND 2

This is a first-draft response and should be assessed as such.

The response is assessed holistically.

6

The six essay is **superior**, demonstrating an insightful understanding of the texts. The essay shows a sophisticated approach to synthesis, including pertinent references. The writing style is effective and demonstrates skillful control of language. Despite its clarity and precision, the essay need not be error-free.

5

The five essay is **proficient**, demonstrating a clear understanding of the texts at an interpretive level. The essay clearly synthesizes the concepts within the texts. References may be explicit or implicit and convincingly support the analysis. The writing is well organized and reflects a strong command of the conventions of language. Errors may be present, but are not distracting.

4

The four essay is **competent**. Understanding of the texts tends to be literal and superficial. Some synthesis is apparent. The essay may rely heavily on paraphrasing. References are present and appropriate, but may be limited. The writing is organized and straightforward. Conventions of language are usually followed, but some errors are evident.

3

The three essay is **barely adequate**. Understanding of the texts may be partially flawed. An attempt at synthesis is evident. References to the texts are not clearly connected to a central idea or may be repetitive. The response may be underdeveloped. A sense of purpose may be evident, but errors can be distracting.

2

The two essay is **inadequate**. While there is an attempt to address the topic, understanding of the texts or the task may be seriously flawed. Reference to only one text does not constitute synthesis. The response may be seriously underdeveloped. Errors are recurring, distracting, and impede meaning.

1

The one essay is **unacceptable**. The essay does not meet the purpose of the task or may be too brief to address the topic. There is a serious lack of control in the writing.

0

The zero essay reflects a complete misunderstanding of the texts and/or the task, or is a restatement of the question.

*Any zero paper must be cleared by the section leader.

NR

A blank paper with no response given.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ross, Sinclair. "Circus in Town." *The Lamp at Noon and Other Stories*. McClelland and Stewart. 1968. pp. 68–72.

Yang, Jia Lynn. "'Happyness' for Sale." *FORTUNE*. September 18, 2006.