

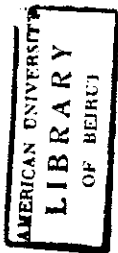
ENGLISH 100 FINAL EXAM
FALL 2001-2002



READING COMPREHENSION

The Perfect Family
by
Alice Hoffman

1. When I was growing up in the 50's, there was only one sort of family, the one we watched on television everyday. Right in front of us, in black and white, was everything we needed to know about family values: the neat patch of lawn, the apple tree, the mother who never once raised her voice, the three lovely children: a Princess, a Kitten, a Bud¹ and, always, the father who knew best.
2. People stayed married forever back then, and roses grew by the front door. We had glass bottles filled with lightning bugs and brand-new swing sets in the backyard, and softball games at dusk. We had summer nights that lasted forever and well-balanced meals, three times a day, in our identical houses, on our identical streets. There was only one small bargain we had to make to exist in this world: we were never to ask questions, never to think about people who didn't have as much or who were different in any way. We ignored desperate marriages and piercing loneliness. And we were never, ever, to wonder what might be hidden from view, behind the unlocked doors, in the privacy of our neighbors' bedrooms and knotty-pine-panelled dens.
3. This was a bargain my own mother could not make. Having once believed that her life would sort itself out to be like the television shows we watched, only real and in color, she'd been left to care for her children on her own, at a time when divorce was so uncommon I did not meet another child of divorced parents until 10 years later, when I went off to college.
4. Back then, it almost made sense when one of my best friends was not allowed to come to my house; her parents did not approve of divorce or my mother's life style. My mother, after all, had a job and a boyfriend and, perhaps even more incriminating, she was the one who took the silver-colored trash cans out to the



¹ Nicknames of characters in a popular 1954-62 television show, *Father Knows Best*.



curb on Monday nights. She did so faithfully, on evenings when she had already balanced the checkbook and paid the bills and ministered to sore throats and made certain we'd had dinner; but all up and down the street everybody knew the truth: taking out the trash was clearly a job for fathers.

5. When I was 10, my mother began to work for the Department of Social Services, a world in which the simple rules of the suburbs did not apply. She counseled young unwed mothers, girls and women who were not allowed to make their own choices, most of whom had not been allowed to finish high school or stay in their own homes, none of whom had been allowed to decide not to continue their pregnancies. Later, she moved to the protective-services department, investigating charges of abuse and neglect, often having to search a child's back and legs for bruises or welts.
6. She would have found some on my friend, left there by her righteous father, the one who wouldn't allow her to visit our home but blackened her eye when, a few years later, he discovered that she was dating a boy he didn't approve of. But none of his neighbors had dared to report him. They would never have imagined that someone like my friend's father, whose trash cans were always tidily placed at the curb, whose lawn was always well cared for, might need watching.
7. To my mother, abuse was a clear-cut issue, if reported and found, but neglect was more of a judgment call. It was, in effect, passing judgment on the nature of love. If my father had not sent the child-support checks on time, if my mother hadn't been white and college-educated, it could have easily been us in one of those apartments she visited, where the heat didn't work on the coldest days, and the dirt was so encrusted you could mop all day and still be called a poor housekeeper, and there was often nothing more for dinner than Frosted Flakes and milk, or , if it was toward the end of the month, the cereal might be served with tap water. Would that have meant my mother loved her children any less, that we were less of a family?
8. My mother never once judged who was a fit mother on the basis of a clean floor, or an unbalanced meal, or a boyfriend who sometimes spent the night. But back then, there were good citizens who were only too ready to set their standards for

women and children, factoring out poverty or exhaustion or simply a different set of beliefs.

9. There are always those who are ready to deal out judgment with the ready fist of the righteous. I know this because before the age of 10 I was one of the righteous, too. I believed that mothers were meant to stay home and fathers should carry out the trash on Monday nights. I believed that parents could create a domestic life that was the next best thing to heaven, if they just tried. That is what I'd been told, that in the best of all worlds we could live identical lives in identical houses.
10. It's a simple view of the world, too simple even for childhood. Certainly, it's a vision that is much too limited for the lives we live now, when only one in 19 families are made up of a wage-earner father, a mother who doesn't work outside the home and two or more children. And even long ago, when I was growing up, we paid too high a price when we cut ourselves off from the rest of the world. We ourselves did not dare to be different. In the safety we created, we became trapped.
11. There are still places where softball games are played at dusk and roses grow by the front door. There are families with sons named Bud, with kind and generous fathers, and mothers who put up strawberry preserves every June and always have time to sing lullabies. But do these families love their children any more than the single mother who works all day? Are their lullabies any sweeter? If I felt deprived as a child, it was only when our family was measured against some notion of what we were supposed to be. The truth of it was, we lacked for little.
12. And now that I have children of my own, and am exhausted at the end of the day in which I've probably failed in a hundred different ways, I am amazed that women alone can manage. That they do, in spite of everything, is a simple fact. They rise from sleep in the middle of the night when their children call out for them. They rush for the cough syrup and cold washcloths and keep watch till dawn. These are real family values, the same ones we knew when we were children. As far as we were concerned our mother could cure a fever with a kiss. This may be the only thing we ever need to know about love. The rest, no one can judge.

Taken from Viewpoint : by Royce Adam

**ENGLISH 100 FINAL EXAM
FALL 2001-2002**

READING COMPREHENSION

**The Perfect Family
by
Alice Hoffman**

Name: _____

Instructor: _____

Section: _____

Time Allowed: 75 Minutes

1. What type of family was typical when Hoffman was growing up? How similar or different were real-life families from those on television? (8 pts.)

2. What was the 'bargain' Hoffman's mother could not make (paragraphs 2 & 3)? Explain briefly. (8 pts.)

3. In paragraph 4, Hoffman says it “almost made sense when one of my best friends was not allowed to come to my house”. Why? (10 pts.)

4. Provide synonyms or explain in your own words the meaning of the following words or expressions: (16 pts.)

a. incriminating (parag. 4) _____

b. ministered (parag. 4) _____

c. encrusted (parag. 7) _____

d. factoring out (parag. 8) _____

5. Hoffman uses contrast throughout her essay. Identify two such situations and briefly explain the points of differences. (18 pts.)

Situation	Differences
1.	
2.	

6. How does Hoffman define 'family values'? Explain in your own words. (16 pts.)

**English 100
Final Examination
Fall 2001-2002**

Essay Topics

Allowed Time: 75 Minutes

Directions: Choose one of the following topics and develop it into an essay of four paragraphs.

1. Would you rather have a television in every room of the house so that everyone could watch his or her own shows, or would you rather have one television that everyone can share? Explain your preferences.
2. There are some trends in society that are changing the traditional family unit as many people have known it. Write an essay in which you discuss some of the reasons behind these changes.
3. The process of writing an e-mail is considered to be somewhat different than that of writing a 'regular' letter. Compare and/or contrast the two forms of communication. Make sure you include the features and characteristics of each.
4. How might shopping patterns change if people refused to work on holidays or Sundays/Fridays? Would this be for the better? Do stores need to be open on holidays? Explain.

☺ **GOOD LUCK!!!!** ☺