

Final Exam

THERE IS ONLY ONE QUESTION.

WHERE DOES "WHAT'S IN A NAME" COME FROM?

DIRECTIONS: READ ALL THE REVIEW QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FIRST.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

- When was the last time you gave an out-of-towner directions to Houston's iconic landmark, the Williams Tower?
- When was the last time you referred to New York City's iconic landmark, the Daimler-Chrysler Building? Or do you prefer its interim designation, the Chrysler-Plymouth-Dodge-Jeep Building?
- Who will be the first to call Houston's own boys of summer, when they succumb to ignominious defeat, the Minute Maidens?
- You are a Houston Rocket and playing for the championship of the NBA. Would you prefer to win this world title in a place called
 - The Summit
 - Compaq Center
 - Lakewood Church
 - Madison Square Garden
- Name the building that has been called "a classic, the standard against which all succeeding tall buildings in . . . Houston have been measured. It has yet to be surpassed."
 - Allied Bank Plaza
(now First Interstate Bank Plaza)
 - Humble Building
(now Exxon Building)
 - Transco Tower
(now Williams Tower)
- What is the name of the world's tallest building, at the moment?
- Who said, "All that is solid melts into air"?
- What's a metonymy?
- Who is Helen McSweeney?

REVIEW ANSWERS

- Helen McSweeney is a woman my mother has known since high school. She has been married to Jack Goggin for about 150 years, but to my mother she is always Helen McSweeney. Except for a year or so early in her marriage, my mother has always lived within 15 miles of where she was born, and lately she has been moving back in closer. Her long-term memory is still intact, and she is suffused with a sense of her place. This sense and the endurance of names are a great comfort to her.
- Metonymy is the rhetorical figure that indicates "the use of the name of one thing for that of another associated with or suggested by it." Metonymy often denotes relationships of contiguity or proximity. My dictionary's example is "the White House" for the "President." Wall Street, Hollywood, and the Alamo are also often metonyms. So are "the Crown" and the images of skirts that sign women's restrooms. In *Pride and Prejudice*, when Elizabeth sees Darcy's estate for the first time, she realizes she has never really seen him: His place puts her in hers. Metonymy is one of the ways our habits of language establish and express our sense of belonging to our surroundings and is as important as memory for giving us a feeling of rootedness and identity.
In "A Sketch of the Past," Virginia Woolf writes of her earliest memories at the family's summer home: "At times I can go back to St. Ives more completely than I can this morning. I can reach a state where I seem to be watching things happen as if I were there. That is, I suppose, my memory supplies what I had forgotten, so that it seems as if it were happening independently, though I am really making it happen. In certain favourable moods, memories — what one has forgotten — come to the top. Now if this is so, is it not possible — I often wonder — that things we have felt with great intensity have an existence independent of our minds; are in fact still in existence?"

Thomas Pynchon believes in this independent, extra-mental existence of personal experiences. Proust believes they come to reside in places and things that hold them in reserve for us until some sensation evokes their memory, the place itself, the moment no longer lost. As they do for my mother, for Proust names endure and hold off mortality.

7. Marx said it in *The Communist Manifesto*, as he explained in fury the insatiable restlessness of capital: "The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society. . . . All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind."

6. And where is Malaysia again?

5. None of the above. It's the Tennessee Building (formerly the Tenneco Building, now El Paso Energy). But there's trend here.

4. There has been no announcement yet that Lakewood Church will change its newest venue's name to Madison Square Garden.

3. I hope I am. It's a lousy name for a ballpark. Enron, as a name, has much more robust consonants and makes you feel even better about stealing home.

2. You must have been sick that week.

1. Huh!

ANSWERS

- It is from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*: What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet. (Act II, scene 2, lines 43 - 44)

MORAL OF THE STORY?

The Williams Tower is, therefore, tall, graceful, even inspiring. But in the restless world that this is, it is the great spike of the Transco that nails us into place!

EXTRA CREDIT

- What Houston buildings should be renamed?
 - Renoir
 - Gotham
- What would some good alternatives be?
 - The Ashurbanipal
 - The Armageddon Lofts
 - Mussolini's

ANSWERS

Sorry, time's up.

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