

**Identity** - by Julio Noboa Polanco

Let them be as flowers,  
always watered, fed, guarded, admired,  
but harnessed to a pot of dirt.

I'd rather be a tall, ugly weed,  
clinging on cliffs, like an eagle  
wind-wavering above high, jagged rocks. 5

To have broken through the surface of stone,  
to live, to feel exposed to the madness  
of the vast, eternal sky.  
To be swayed by the breezes of an ancient sea, 10  
carrying my soul, my seed,  
beyond the mountains of time or into the abyss of the bizarre.

I'd rather be unseen, and if  
then shunned by everyone,  
than to be a pleasant-smelling flower, 15  
growing in clusters in the fertile valley,  
where they're praised, handled, and plucked  
by greedy, human hands.

I'd rather smell of musty, green stench  
than of sweet, fragrant lilac. 20  
If I could stand alone, strong and free,  
I'd rather be a tall, ugly weed.

1. The diction of “guarded,” “harnessed,” “clusters,” and “greedy” all indicate that the speaker has an attitude of \_\_\_\_\_ towards the people referred to as “them” in the poem.
  - a. admiration
  - b. jealousy
  - c. annoyance
  - d. contempt
2. What type of literary device does the first line of the poem contain?
  - a. simile
  - b. metaphor
  - c. hyperbole
  - d. irony
3. What does the speaker desire in lines 4-12?
  - a. power to defeat his/her rivals
  - b. freedom to live life as he/she chooses
  - c. freedom to travel to exotic locations
  - d. a life free from social and work responsibilities
4. What does breaking through stone in line 7 prove about the speaker?
  - a. He/she is destructive.
  - b. He/she is stubborn.
  - c. He/she is admired.
  - d. He/she is willful.

5. Which term best expresses the meaning of the word “seed” as used in line 11?
- body
  - common sense
  - scent
  - spirit
6. What effect does the poet achieve by repeating the phrase “I’d rather”?
- regular meter
  - regular rhyme scheme
  - thorough explanation of the poem’s title
  - reinforcement of the speaker’s personal desire
7. What point is the author of this poem attempting to make?
- To be beautiful and admired should be a major goal in life.
  - Beauty and comfort are meaningless without freedom and individuality.
  - Breaking free from the everyday routine of life will drive a person crazy.
  - People need to stand up and do what is right by helping to protect the environment.
8. With which statement about the importance of friends would the speaker most likely agree?
- Real friends allow a person to be an individual.
  - Good friends will join their friends’ cliques and share their same habits.
  - The best friends never allow their friends to be lonely and isolated.
  - True friends admire a friend who stands up and protests for a cause.
9. The overall mood of this poem is
- liberating.
  - pessimistic.
  - content.
  - sorrowful.