

English IV AP – Literature and Composition | Prose Objective #10:
“When we were still alive...”

Name _____

Period _____

Read the following passage and choose the best answer for each objective question.

When we were still alive, the five of us in that kerosene-lit house, on Friday and Saturday nights, at an hour when in the spring and summer there was still abundant light in the air, I would set out in my father's car for town, where my friends lived. I had, by moving ten miles away, at least acquired friends: an illustration of that strange law whereby, like Orpheus leading Eurydice, we achieve our desire by turning our back on it. (5)
I had even gained a girl, so that the vibrations were as sexual as social that made me jangle with anticipation as I clowned in front of the mirror in our kitchen, shaving from a basin of stove-heated water, combing my hair with a dripping comb, adjusting my reflection in the mirror until I had achieved just that electric angle from which my face seemed beautiful and everlasting, by the very volumes of air and sky and grass that lay mutely banked about our home, beloved. (10)

My grandmother would hover near me, watching fearfully, as she had when I was a child, afraid that I would fall from a tree. Delirious, humming, I would swoop and lift her, lift her like a child, crooking one arm under her knees and cupping the other behind her back. Exultant in my height, my strength, I would lift that frail brittle body weighing perhaps a hundred pounds and twirl it in my arms while the rest of the family watched with startled smiles of alarm. Had I stumbled, or dropped her, I might have broken her back, but my joy always proved a secure cradle. And whatever irony was in the impulse, whatever implicit contrast between this ancient husk, scarcely female, and the pliant, warm girl I would embrace before the evening was done, direct delight flooded away: I was carrying her who had carried me, I was giving my past a dance, I had lifted the anxious caretaker of my childhood from the floor, I was bringing her with my boldness to the edge of danger, from which she had always sought to guard me (15) (20)

1. _____ The effect of the words "vibrations" and "jangle" (line 6) is most strongly reinforced by which?
 - a. "adjusting my reflection" (line 8).
 - b. "electric angle" (line 9).
 - c. "frail brittle body" (line 15).
 - d. "irony was in the impulse" (line 18).
 - e. "implicit contrast" (line 19).

2. _____ Which of the following best restates the idea conveyed in lines 8-11?
 - a. There are moments in youth when we have an exaggerated sense of our own beauty.
 - b. We can more easily change people's opinions of ourselves by adjusting our behavior than by changing our appearances.
 - c. Vanity is a necessary though difficult part of the maturing process.
 - d. How others see us determines how we see our environment.
 - e. Adolescence is a time of uncertainty, insecurity, and self-contradiction.

3. _____ In line 10 "everlasting" modifies which of the following words?
 - a. "I" (line 9).
 - b. "my face" (line 9).
 - c. "beautiful" (line 10).
 - d. "lay" (line 10).
 - e. "beloved" (line 11).

4. _____ The image of the "very volumes of air and sky and grass that lay mutely banked about" shows the speaker's
 - a. desire to understand his place in the universe.
 - b. profound love of nature.
 - c. feelings of oppression by his environment.
 - d. expansive belief in himself.
 - e. inability to comprehend the meaning of life.

5. _____ The attitude of the speaker at the time of action is best described as
 - a. understanding.
 - b. exuberant.
 - c. nostalgic.
 - d. superior.
 - e. fearful.

6. _____ The passage supports all of the following statements about the speaker's dancing EXCEPT
 - a. He danced partly to express his joy in seeing his girlfriend later that night.
 - b. His recklessness with his grandmother revealed his inability to live up to his family's expectations.
 - c. In picking up his grandmother, he dramatized that she is no longer his caretaker.
 - d. He had danced that way with his grandmother before.
 - e. His dancing demonstrated the strength and power of youth.

7. _____ The description of the grandmother in lines 15-16 and line 19 emphasizes which of the following?
 - a. Her emotional insecurity.
 - b. The uniqueness of her character.
 - c. Her influence on the family.
 - d. Her resignation to old age.
 - e. Her poignant fragility.

8. _____ Which best describes the speaker's point of view toward the grandmother in the second paragraph?
 - a. Moving to the country has given him a new perspective, one that enables him to realize the importance of his grandmother.
 - b. Even as a young man, he realizes the uniqueness of his grandmother and her affection for him.
 - c. He becomes aware of the irony of his changing relationship with his grandmother only in retrospect.
 - d. It is mainly through his grandmother's interpretation of his behavior that he becomes aware of her influence on him.
 - e. Comparing the enduring love of his grandmother to his superficial feelings for the young girl heightens his appreciation of his grandmother.

9. _____ Which of the following patterns of syntax best characterizes the style of the passage?
- Sparse sentences containing a minimum of descriptive language.
 - Long sentences interspersed with short, contrasting sentences.
 - Sentences that grow progressively more complex as the passage progresses.
 - Sentences with many modifying phrases and subordinate clauses.
 - A movement from narrative sentences in the beginning to expository ones at the end.
10. _____ In this passage the speaker is chiefly concerned with
- presenting grandparents as symbols worthy of reverence.
 - demonstrating the futility of adolescent romanticism.
 - satirizing his own youthful egocentricity.
 - considering himself as an adolescent on the brink of adulthood.
 - revealing his progression from idealism to pragmatism.
11. _____ What is the overwhelming tone of the passage?
- Thoughtful reflection.
 - Ironic humor.
 - Joyful anticipation.
 - Contrasting hopes.
 - Reckless inhibition.
12. _____ What does the opening line establish?
- The piece was set in the past.
 - That the speaker is dead.
 - The piece magical realism.
 - Poverty does not define a person.
 - The piece will be nostalgic.
13. _____ The first four lines are dominated by which?
- Guilt.
 - Personification.
 - Symbolism.
 - Metaphor.
 - Paradox.
14. _____ The dancing with the grandmother around the room is a dance of all of the following EXCEPT
- anticipation.
 - independence.
 - love.
 - delight.
 - culpability.
15. _____ We may infer that the true reason behind this youth's social blossoming is
- a strong immediate family.
 - the distance he now lives from his friends.
 - his age.
 - his parents new-found wealth.
 - an outgoing personality.

