

English IV AP – Literature and Composition | Prose Objective #11:
“One night a moth...”

Name _____

Period _____

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

One night a moth flew into a candle, was caught, burnt dry, and held. I must have been staring at the candle, or maybe I looked up when a shadow crossed my page; at any rate, I saw it all. A golden female moth, a biggish one with a two-inch wingspan, flapped into the fire, dropped her abdomen into the wet wax, stuck, flamed, frazzled and fried in second. Her moving wings ignited like tissue paper, enlarging the circle of light in the clearing and creating out of the darkness the sudden blue sleeves of my sweater, the green leaves of jewelweed by my side, the ragged red trunk of a pine. At once the light contracted again and the moth's wings vanished in a fine, foul smoke. At the same time her six legs clawed, curled, blackened, and ceased, disappearing utterly. And her head, jerked in spasms, making a spattering noise; her antennae crisped and burned away and her heaving mouth parts crackled like pistol fire. When it was all over, her head was, so far as I could determine, gone, gone the long way of her wings and legs. Had she been new, or old? Had she mated and laid her eggs, had she done her work? All that was left was the glowing horn shell of her abdomen and thorax -- a fraying, partially collapsed gold tube jammed upright in the candle's round pool. (5)

And then this moth-essence, this spectacular skeleton, began to act as a wick. She kept burning. The wax rose in the moth's body from her soaking abdomen to her thorax to the jagged hole where her head should be, and widened into flame, a saffron-yellow flame that robed her to the ground like any immolating monk. That candle had two wicks, two flames of identical height, side by side. The moth's head was fire. She burned for two hours, until I blew her out. (10)

She burned for two hours without changing, without bending or leaning -- only glowing within, like a building fire glimpsed through silhouetted walls, like a hollow saint, like a flame-faced virgin gone to God, while I read by her light, kindled, while Rimbaud in Paris burnt out his brains in a thousand poems, while night pooled wetly at my feet. (15)

1. _____ All of the following are present in the opening sentence of the passage EXCEPT
 - a. subordinate clauses.
 - b. an objective tone.
 - c. elements in a series.
 - d. a typical narrative opening.
 - e. more verbs than nouns or adjectives.

2. _____ The "fried" in line 5 derives force from which of the following?
 - I. Its commonplace associations.
 - II. Its location in the sentence.
 - III. Its alliterative associations with the verbs that preceded it.
 - a. II only.
 - b. I and II only.
 - c. I and III only.
 - d. II and III only.
 - e. I, II, and III.

3. _____ The objects of the verb "creating" (line 6) combine to form an impression of
 - a. familiar reality imposed on an unfamiliar locale
 - b. sudden color in a formerly monochromatic scene.
 - c. miraculous isolation in a hostile environment.
 - d. ominous fragility in a threatening episode.
 - e. supernatural inspiration of creative thought.

4. _____ The phrase "gone the long way of her wings and legs" (line 13) emphasizes the
- unusual proportions of the moth.
 - unexpected course of the moth's death.
 - irrevocable disappearance of the moth's head.
 - rapidity with which the fire consumed the moth.
 - foulness of the lingering smoke.
5. _____ All of the following are true of the sentence "She kept burning" (line 18) EXCEPT
- Its brevity makes it emphatic.
 - In context its tone is one of awed fascination.
 - In context the word "burning" means "avenging."
 - The feminine pronoun links the image to the specificity of the previous paragraph.
 - The feminine pronoun humanizes the moth in preparation for references to martyrs.
6. _____ In the second and third paragraphs, the speaker focuses on the moth as
- a specimen embodying qualities inherent in all moths.
 - a reflection of her own past experiences.
 - essentially a creation of her own imagination.
 - something more than a moth, both literally and figuratively.
 - an innocent victim of human passivity.
7. _____ Which of these prepares the reader for the image of the "immolating monk" (line 20)?
- "spectacular skeleton" (line 17).
 - "jagged hole" (line 19).
 - "saffron-yellow flame" (line 20).
 - "robed" (line 20).
- I and II only.
 - I and III only.
 - III and IV only.
 - II, III, and IV only.
 - I, II, III, and IV.
8. _____ The repetition of "She burned for two hours" (lines 22-23) serves all of the following functions EXCEPT to
- provide a transition between the second and third paragraphs.
 - imply that the passage of time has several different meanings.
 - maintain the idea that the burning object has a noteworthy persistence.
 - focus the reader's attention on the burning moth.
 - dramatize the narrator's fixation on the duration of the event.
9. _____ In line 25 "kindled" is best interpreted to mean
- relaxed.
 - angered.
 - enamored.
 - betrayed.
 - inspired.
10. _____ The image of the poet Rimbaud expands the meaning of the description of the burning moth to include the
- futility of excess in a world governed by physical laws.
 - self-destructive yet self-perpetuating passion of the artist.
 - selfishness of those who would use the light of others to find truth.
 - power of the intellect over human behavior.
 - necessity of recording and analyzing mystical experiences.

11. _____ In which is the use of alliteration to heighten the intensity of the poem most evident?
- Lines 1-2.
 - Lines 9-10.
 - Lines 13-14.
 - Lines 15-17.
 - Lines 19-21.
12. _____ Which best describes the rhetorical development of the passage as a whole?
- Progress from exposition to argument.
 - Development from hypothesis to proof.
 - Transition from sympathetic narrative to objective description.
 - Expansion from descriptive narration to poetic meditation.
 - Movement from contemplative rumination to active participation.
13. _____ The final tone of the work is one of
- melancholy.
 - nostalgia.
 - dejectedness.
 - respite.
 - annoyance.
14. _____ The language of the work is principally
- elevated and formal.
 - substandard and ill-educated.
 - repetitive and demeaning.
 - colloquial and witty.
 - informal and reflective.
15. _____ What is essentially true of the narrator of this piece?
- She was unmoved by the experience.
 - She was the moth symbolically.
 - She was bothered to have been disturbed.
 - She was touched by the moment's singularity.
 - She was an admirer of Rimbaud.