

Poetry Multiple Choice Practice

Read the following poem carefully before you choose your answers.

The following poem was first published in 1914.

A Lady

1 You are beautiful and faded
 Like an old opera tune
 Played upon a harpsichord;
 Or like the sun-flooded silks

5 Of an eighteenth-century boudoir.*
 In your eyes
 Smoulder the fallen roses of out-lived minutes,
 And the perfume of your soul
 Is vague and suffusing,

10 With the pungence of sealed spice-jars.
 Your half-tones delight me,
 And I grow mad with gazing
 At your blent colours.

15 My vigour is a new-minted penny,
 Which I cast at your feet.
 Gather it up from the dust,
 That its sparkle may amuse you.

* a womans private bedroom or dressing room

1. In the references to an “old opera tune” (line 2), “sun-flooded silks” (line 4), and “sealed spice-jars” (line 10), the speaker uses
- (A) allusion to hint at the lady’s social prominence
 - (B) alliteration to emphasize the lady’s subtle power
 - (C) hyperbole to evoke the lady’s advanced age
 - (D) imagery to suggest the lady’s wide-ranging interests
 - (E) personification to show the lady’s distinctive beauty
2. In context, the phrase “grow mad” (line 12) suggests that the speaker is

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- (A) angry
- (B) inspired
- (C) delusional
- (D) reckless

(E) impassioned ✓

3. In the similes in lines 1-5, the “harpichord” and the “boudoir” primarily serve to evoke which of the following?

(A) Elegance and bygone days ✓

- (B) Tradition and the arts
- (C) Vitality and originality
- (D) Materialism and superficial beauty
- (E) Wealth and cultural dominance

4. In context, the image of the penny in line 14 is appropriate because its

(A) low value contrasts with the apparent wealth of the lady

(B) freshness contrasts with the appearance of the lady ✓

- (C) ordinariness contrasts with the splendor of the lady
- (D) insignificance contrasts with the fame of the lady
- (E) worthlessness contrasts with the haughtiness of the lady

5. Which best describes how stanzas are used in the poem?

- (A) To indicate the passage of time
- (B) To suggest an unspoken conflict

(C) To emphasize a change in focus ✓

- (D) To signal a reversal in attitude
- (E) To convey a different point of view

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Read the following poem carefully before you choose your answers.

A Whippoorwill in the Woods

- (5) Night after night, it was very nearly enough,
they said, to drive you crazy: a whippoorwill
in the woods repeating itself like the stuck groove
of an LP with a defect, and no way possible
of turning the thing off.
- (10) And night after night, they said, in the insomniac
small hours the whipsawing voice of obsession
would have come in closer, the way a sick
thing does when it's done for—or maybe the reason
was nothing more melodramatic
- (15) than a night-flying congregation of moths, lured in
in their turn by house-glow, the strange heat
of it—imagine the nebular dangerousness, if one
were a moth, the dark pockmarked with beaks, the great
dim shapes, the bright extinction—
- (20) if moths are indeed, after all, what a whippoorwill
favors. Who knows? Anyhow, from one point of view
insects are to be seen as an ailment, moths above all:
the filmed-over, innumerable nodes of spun-out tissue
untidying the trees, the larval
- (25) spew of such hairy hordes, one wonders what use
they can be other than as a guarantee no bird
goes hungry. We're like that. The webbiness,
the gregariousness of the many are what we can't abide.
We single out for notice
- above all what's disjunct, the way birds are,
with their unhooked-up, cheekily anarchic
dartings and flashings, their uncalled-for color—
the indelible look of the rose-breasted grosbeak

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(30) an aunt of mine, a noticer

of such things before the noticing had or needed
a name, drew my five-year-old attention up to, in
the green deeps of a maple. She never married,
believed her cat had learned to leave birds alone,

(35) and for years, node after node,

by lingering degrees she made way within for
what wasn't so much a thing as it was a system,
a webwork of error that throve until it killed her.
What is health? We must all die sometime.

(40) Whatever it is out there

in the woods, that begins to seem like
a species of madness, we survive as we can:
the hooked-up, the humdrum, the brief, tragic
wonder of being at all. The whippoorwill out in

(45) the woods, for me, brought back

as by a relay, from a place at such a distance
no recollection now in place could reach so far,
the memory of a memory she told me of once:
of how her father, my grandfather, by whatever

(50) now unfathomable happenstance,

carried her (she might have been five) into the breathing night.
"Listen!" she said he'd said. "Did you hear it?
That was a whippoorwill." And she (and I) never forgot.

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6. The whippoorwill is most probably called a "voice of obsession" (line 7) because it

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- (A) has a shrill cry
- (B) repeats itself ✓
- (C) is invisible
- (D) constantly tries to come nearer
- (E) is probably sick
7. In line 26, "what's disjunct" refers to something that
- (A) cannot be seen by most observers
- (B) stands outside the purely natural world
- (C) is broken and fragmented
- (D) faces a constant threat of extinction
- (E) is not incorporated in a larger entity ✓
8. In line 38, the cause of the aunt's death is described in language most similar to that used by the speaker to describe
- (A) cats
- (B) birds
- (C) moths ✓
- (D) the whippoorwill
- (E) the grandfather
9. The diction used to describe moths in lines 19–21 suggests that
- (A) science is slowly beginning to understand certain mysteries
- (B) the speaker finds some aspects of nature alien to her ✓
- (C) nature is able to provide a truly tragic spectacle
- (D) nature is governed by a higher power
- (E) the beauty of nature is a source of comfort to the speaker
10. The grandfather's words (lines 52–53) convey a sense of
- (A) regret
- (B) awe ✓
- (C) tragedy
- (D) hope
- (E) danger
11. For the speaker, the rose-breasted grosbeak and the whippoorwill are similar in that they both

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- (A) have the ability to disturb people's sleep
(B) feed principally on moths
(C) stand out as individuals amid their surroundings ✓
(D) symbolize the individuality of the speaker
(E) are natural creatures that seem to violate the laws of nature
12. In line 34, the speaker implies that the aunt
(A) had lived most of her life fearing natural disaster
(B) was curious about scientific information that dealt with nature
(C) understood nature better than the speaker
(D) preferred not to face certain realities about nature ✓
(E) was largely indifferent to her natural surroundings
13. In the first stanza, the whippoorwill is presented chiefly as
(A) a kind of poet
(B) a symbol of death
(C) an emblem of freedom
(D) an annoyance ✓
(E) a messenger
14. Lines 44-53 have all of the following functions EXCEPT to
(A) return to the initial subject of the poem
(B) illustrate the influence of childhood experience
(C) link the present to the past
(D) emphasize the chaotic quality of natural events ✓
(E) evoke a family relationship
15. The object of "to" in line 32 is
(A) "look" (line 29) ✓
(B) "aunt" (line 30)
(C) "things" (line 31)
(D) "name" (line 32)
(E) "deeps" (line 33)
16. Which of the following lines contains an example of personification?

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- (A) Line 33
- (B) Line 39
- (C) Line 43
- (D) Line 48

(E) Line 51 ✓

17. The speaker hypothesizes that moths might be

- (A) bent on self-destruction
- (B) dangerous to whippoorwills
- (C) more like human beings than whippoorwills are
- (D) heroic actors in a tragic drama

(E) food for whippoorwills ✓

18. In the poem as a whole, the speaker views nature as being essentially

- (A) inspiring
- (B) comforting

(C) unfathomable ✓

- (D) vicious
- (E) benign