The Beggar

by Anton Chekhov
Translated by Marian Fell

1  “Kind sir, have pity; turn your attention to a poor, hungry man! For three days I have had nothing to eat; I haven’t five kopecks\(^1\) for a lodging. I swear it before God. For eight years I was a village schoolteacher and then I lost my place through intrigues. I fell a victim to calumny. It is a year now since I have had any work—”

2  The lawyer Skvortsoff looked at the ragged, fawn-colored overcoat of the applicant, at his dull, drunken eyes, at the red spot on either cheek, and it seemed to him as if he had seen this man somewhere before.

3  “I have now had an offer of a position in the province of Kaluga,” the beggar went on, “but I haven’t the money to get there. Help me kindly; I am ashamed to ask, but—I am obliged to by circumstances.”

4  Skvortsoff’s eyes fell on the man’s overshoes, one of which was high and the other low, and he suddenly remembered something.

5  “Look here, it seems to me I met you day before yesterday in Sadovaya Street,” he said, “but you told me then that you were a student who had been expelled, and not a village schoolteacher. Do you remember?”

6  “No-no, that can’t be so,” mumbled the beggar, taken aback. “I am a village schoolteacher, and if you like I can show you my papers.”

7  “Never mind lying! You called yourself a student and even told me what you had been expelled for. Don’t you remember?”

8  Skvortsoff flushed and turned away from the ragged creature with an expression of disgust.

9  “This is dishonesty, my dear sir!” he cried angrily. “This is swindling! I shall send the police for you! Even if you are poor and hungry, that does not give you any right to lie brazenly and shamelessly!”

10  The poor man caught hold of the door handle and looked furtively round the entrance hall, like a detected thief.

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\(^1\) kopecks: Russian coins of little value; 100 kopecks equal one ruble.
“I—I am not lying—” he muttered. “I can show you my papers.”

“Who would believe you?” Skvortsoff continued indignantly. “Don’t you know that it’s a low, dirty trick to exploit the sympathy which society feels for village schoolteachers and students? It’s revolting.”

Skvortsoff lost his temper and began to scold the beggar unmercifully. The impudent lying of the ragamuffin offended what he, Skvortsoff, most prized in himself: his kindness, his tender heart, his compassion for all unhappy things. That lie, an attempt to take advantage of the pity of its “subject,” seemed to him to profane the charity which he liked to extend to the poor out of the purity of his heart. At first the ragged man continued to protest innocence, but soon he grew silent and hung his head in confusion.

“Sir!” he said, laying his hand on his heart, “the fact is I—was lying! I am neither a student nor a schoolteacher. All that was a fiction. Formerly I sang in a Russian choir and was sent away for drunkenness. But what else can I do? I can’t get along without lying. No one will give me anything when I tell the truth. With truth a man would starve to death or die of cold for lack of a lodging. You reason justly, I understand you, but—what can I do?”

“What can you do? You ask what you can do?” cried Skvortsoff, coming close to him. “Work! That’s what you can do! You must work!”

“Work—yes, I know that myself; but where can I find work?”

“Rot! You’re young and healthy and strong; you could always find work if you only wanted to, but you’re lazy and spoiled and drunken! You smell like a barroom. You’re rotten and false to the core, and all you can do is to lie. When you consent to lower yourself to work, you want a job in an office or in a choir or in a billiard parlor—any employment for which you can get money without doing anything! How would you like to try your hand at manual labor? No, you’d never be a porter or a factory hand; you’re a man of pretensions, you are!”

“You judge harshly,” cried the beggar with a bitter laugh.

“Where can I find manual labor? It’s too late for me to be a clerk because in trade one has to begin as a boy; no one would ever take me for a porter because they couldn’t order me about; no factory would have me because for that one has to know a trade, and I know none.”
“Nonsense! You always find some excuse! How would you like to chop wood for me?”

“I wouldn’t refuse to do that, but in these days even skilled woodcutters find themselves sitting without bread.”

“Huh! You loafers all talk that way. As soon as an offer is made you, you refuse it! Will you come and chop wood for me?”

“Yes, sir; I will.”

“Very well; we’ll soon find out. Splendid—we’ll see—”

Skvortsoff hastened along, rubbing his hands, not without a feeling of malice, and called his cook out of the kitchen.

“Here, Olga,” he said, “take this gentleman into the woodshed and let him chop wood.”

The tattered scarecrow shrugged his shoulders as if in perplexity, and went irresolutely after the cook. It was obvious from his gait that he had not consented to go and chop wood because he was hungry and wanted work, but simply from pride and shame, because he had been trapped by his own words. It was obvious, too, that his strength had been undermined by vodka and that he was unhealthy and did not feel the slightest inclination for toil.

Skvortsoff hurried into the dining room. From its windows one could see the woodshed and everything that went on in the yard. Standing at the window, Skvortsoff saw the cook and the beggar come out into the yard by the back door and make their way across the dirty snow to the shed. Olga glared wrathfully at her companion, shoved him aside with her elbow, unlocked the shed, and angrily banged the door.

“We probably interrupted the woman over her coffee,” thought Skvortsoff. “What an ill-tempered creature!”

Next he saw the false teacher, false student seat himself on a log and become lost in thought with his red cheeks resting on his fists. The woman flung down an ax at his feet, spat angrily, and judging from the expression of her lips, began to scold him. The beggar irresolutely pulled a log of wood toward him, set it up between his feet, and tapped it feebly with the ax. The log wavered and fell down. The beggar again pulled it to him, blew on his freezing hands, and tapped it with his ax cautiously, as if afraid of hitting his overshoe or of cutting off his finger. The stick of wood again fell to the ground.

Skvortsoff’s anger had vanished and he now began to feel a little sorry and ashamed of himself for having set a
spoiled, drunken, perchance sick man to work at menial labor in the cold.

32 "Well, never mind," he thought, going into his study from the dining room. "I did it for his own good."

33 An hour later Olga came in and announced that the wood had all been chopped.

34 "Good! Give him half a ruble," said Skvortsoff. "If he wants to he can come back and cut wood on the first day of each month. We can always find work for him."

35 On the first of the month the beggar made his appearance again and earned half a ruble, although he could barely stand on his legs. From that day on he often appeared in the yard and every time work was found for him. Now he would shovel snow, now put the woodshed in order, now beat the dust out of rugs and mattresses. Every time he received from twenty to forty kopecks, and once, even a pair of old trousers were sent out to him.

36 When Skvortsoff moved into another house he hired him to help in the packing and hauling of the furniture. This time the poor fellow was sober, gloomy, and silent. He hardly touched the furniture, and walked behind the wagons hanging his head, not even making a pretense of appearing busy. He only shivered in the cold and became embarrassed when the carters jeered at him for his idleness, his feebleness, and his tattered, fancy overcoat. After the moving was over Skvortsoff sent for him.

37 "Well, I see that my words have taken effect," he said, handing him a ruble. "Here's for your pains. I see you are sober and have no objection to work. What is your name?"

38 "Lushkoff."

39 "Well, Lushkoff, I can now offer you some other, cleaner employment. Can you write?"

40 "I can."

41 "Then take this letter to a friend of mine tomorrow and you will be given some copying to do. Work hard, don't drink, and remember what I have said to you. Good-by!"

42 Pleased at having put a man on the right path, Skvortsoff tapped Lushkoff kindly on the shoulder and even gave him his hand at parting. Lushkoff took the letter, and from that day forth came no more to the yard for work.

43 Two years went by. Then one evening, as Skvortsoff was standing by the ticket window of a theater paying for his

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2 ruble: The chief monetary unit of Russia.
seat, he noticed a little man beside him with a coat collar of curly fur and a worn sealskin cap. This little individual timidly asked the ticket seller for a seat in the gallery and paid for it in copper coins.

“Lushkoff, is that you?” cried Skvortsoff, recognizing in the little man his former woodchopper. “How are you? What are you doing? How is everything with you?”

“All right. I work for the government now and get thirty-five rubles a month.”

“Thank Heaven! That's fine! I am delighted for your sake. I am very, very glad, Lushkoff. You see, you are my godson, in a sense. I gave you a push along the right path, you know. Do you remember what a scolding I gave you, eh? I nearly had you sinking into the ground at my feet that day. Thank you, old man, for not forgetting my words.”

“Thank you, too,” said Lushkoff. “If I hadn’t come to you then I might still have been calling myself a teacher or a student to this day. Yes, by flying to your protection I dragged myself out of a pit.”

“I am very glad, indeed.”

“Thank you for your kind words and deeds. You talked splendidly to me then. I am very grateful to you and to your cook. God bless that good and noble woman! You spoke finely then, and I shall be indebted to you to my dying day; but, strictly speaking, it was your cook, Olga, who saved me.”

“How is that?”

“Like this. When I used to come to your house to chop wood she used to begin: ‘Oh, you sot, you! Oh, you miserable creature! There’s nothing for you but ruin.’ And then she would sit down opposite me and grow sad, look into my face and weep. ‘Oh, you unlucky man! There is no pleasure for you in this world and there will be none in the world to come. You drunkard! You will burn in hell. Oh, you unhappy one!’ And so she would carry on, you know, in that strain. I can’t tell you how much misery she suffered, how many tears she shed for my sake. But the chief thing was—she used to chop the wood for me. Do you know, sir, that I did not chop one single stick of wood for you? She did it all. Why this saved me, why I changed, why I stopped drinking at the sight of her I cannot explain. I only know that, owing to her words and noble deeds a change took place in my heart; she set me right and I shall never forget it. However, it is time to go now; there goes the bell.”

Lushkoff bowed and entered the theater.
Meet the New Huck

His passion for the river means cleaning it up, one object at a time

by Walter Kirn

1 One hundred and seventy-nine refrigerators. One hundred and twenty-five jugs of pesticide. Four motorcycles. Three hundred propane tanks. Two Jacuzzis. Seven lawn mowers. One prosthetic leg. And it goes on—a partial inventory of the debris that Chad Pregracke, 25, has hauled from the depths of the muddy Mississippi in a lonesome crusade to Roto-Root the river all the way from St. Louis to Dubuque. It's an all-consuming mission, worthy of an aquatic Don Quixote,1 and Pregracke's Mississippi River Beautification and Restoration Project has been at it for almost four years. After waking each morning on the crowded houseboat that is home to himself, five assistants and three dogs, he ventures out among the sloughs and sandbars to battle a rising tide of trash and fill the small flotilla of rusting barges that he pushes upstream with the help of passing tugboats, a clutch of corporate sponsors and sheer willpower.

The project is not a cause; it's a quest. Pregracke grew up just feet from the river in East Moline, Ill. He spent his summers as a teenager diving for freshwater mussels with his father and selling the iridescent shells to the Japanese cultured-pearl industry. To save money, the pair camped out on islands and beaches, living a fresh-air, idyllic life straight out of Mark Twain. By the time he started college, though, Pregracke had come to see the river differently—not as a source of income and diversion but as a threatened, fragile living creature that needed his help. Crawling on the weedy bottom in his search for shells, attached by a hose to an air tank on the surface, he couldn't see much—the water was too turbid—but he could feel things. Things he didn't like. Sunken tires. Barrels of chemicals. Microwave ovens and deflated basketballs.

Pregracke decided he had to do something. “When I started out, a lot of people thought I was nuts,” he says. “But in America, it's still possible to do something like this. There was an opportunity for me to make a difference.” In the summer of 1997, without outside funding or public recognition, he single-handedly removed 45,000 lbs. of junk from a 100-mile stretch of shoreline. Soon a modest grant arrived from Alcoa Corp.

With little money but plenty of boyish zeal, Pregracke began to enlarge upon his ambitions. He hunted up a couple of outboard motors, the barges, two aluminum runabouts and an Army-surplus bridge-building boat, which he equipped with a John Deere combine cab to make a sort of tugboat. He raised a sinking houseboat, made it seaworthy, assembled

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1 The idealistic title character of a novel by Miguel de Cervantes
an eager young crew and hit the river—vowing to spend his summers on the water until the job was done.

“Garbage is not the biggest problem the river faces,” Pregracke says, “but it’s the one I can make a dent in myself.” If this goal sounds overly ambitious for a shoestring operation with an annual budget of $200,000, you haven’t seen Pregracke at work. He’s tireless. Today he’s driving a forklift around his barges, sorting old car seats and lawn ornaments and tractor chassis into separate piles for recycling. All sandy hair and freckles, dressed in a life jacket, cap and khaki shorts and sporting a pair of wraparound dark shades, Pregracke could be a latter-day Huck Finn. His grin is impish, his body compact and coiled. Two lean, tanned young women in similar uniforms—Jennifer Anderson, 26, and Lisa Hoffman, 22—toil alongside him, heaving corroded truck tires onto a towering stack. “It’s hard work, but it’s fun work,” Hoffman says, describing a regimen of 12-hour days hauling discarded Porta Potties from stagnant, snake-filled sloughs. The crew will scour 900 miles of river this year, stopping off in towns along the way for daylong community-cleanup festivals that bring out hundreds of local volunteers.

Pregracke is a blue-eyed Midwestern patriot who flies a pair of large flags from one of his barges: Old Glory and a black banner reading THANKS VETERANS FOR OUR FREEDOM. Though he hasn’t experienced combat, he feels a mystical bond to fighting men that he says he can’t explain but that fills him with gratitude when the going gets tough. “When it’s really hot and the mosquitoes are tearing you up, I just think, ‘At least I’m not getting shot at. At least I’m not getting my head blown off,’ ” he says.

For all his idealism, though, he’s not naive. He knows the value of modern public relations. He decorates his barges with the logos of sponsors, from Cargill to O’Doul’s, and maintains a cutting-edge website, www.cleanrivers.com. From his sleeping bag on the houseboat, he uses a pair of cell phones to drum up funds and give interviews to journalists. He’s made some influential friends as well, including Robert Kennedy, Jr., whose own conservation group, Riverkeeper, Pregracke admires and draws inspiration from.

Part innocent, part impresario and a natural motivator on a par with the slickest infomercial guru, Pregracke has big plans. His Adopt a Mississippi Mile Program hopes to do for the father of waters what similar land-based efforts have done for the nation’s highways. Once the program is on its feet, he’s heading east.

“I’m going to clean up a lot of the major rivers in America,” he says. Next year he intends to attack the Ohio, from Cincinnati to Pittsburgh. He’d love to clean up the Hudson too and, maybe, while he’s at it, the Potomac. What would help is a tugboat of his own (the homemade John Deere rig is showing its age, and hitching rides with commercial haulers is a hit-and-miss affair), but even without one, he vows, he’ll plunge ahead, refrigerator by refrigerator, prosthetic leg by prosthetic leg. “I’m going to do it right,” he says, steering his runabout into a small bay filled with hundreds of bobbing plastic soda bottles, “and I’m going to finish it.”

Believe him.
One person can make a difference

That person could be You!

Call 1-555-GIV-BACK for volunteer opportunities in your community.
Use “The Beggar” to answer questions 1–6.

1. Which words from paragraph 10 help the reader understand the meaning of the word *furtively*?
   A. like a detected thief
   B. caught hold
   C. round the entrance hall
   D. poor man

2. What is paragraph 46 mostly about?
   A. Skvortsoff asks Lushkoff to deliver a letter to a friend.
   B. Lushkoff helps Skvortsoff move to another house.
   C. Skvortsoff takes credit for turning Lushkoff’s life around.
   D. Lushkoff has found a respectable, well-paying job.
3 The author uses dialogue in the story mainly to —
   A establish the setting
   B describe Skvortsoff’s background
   C compare ideas
   D reveal information about the characters

4 In paragraph 27, the author uses a metaphor to —
   A emphasize Skvortsoff’s disgust toward Lushkoff
   B describe the worn appearance of Lushkoff
   C show a contrast between Lushkoff and Skvortsoff
   D highlight Lushkoff’s drunken condition
5 Lushkoff agrees to chop wood for Skvortsoff mainly because —
   A the beggar needs the money for clothes
   B the beggar is eager to change his life
   C Skvortsoff has promised to feed him
   D Skvortsoff has shamed him into working

6 Which of these quotations supports the conclusion that Lushkoff takes some responsibility for his own success?
   A “Do you know, sir, that I did not chop one single stick of wood for you?”
   B “. . . she set me right and I shall never forget it.”
   C “Yes, by flying to your protection I dragged myself out of a pit.”
   D “I am very grateful to you and to your cook.”
Use “Meet the New Huck” to answer questions 7–12.

7 Pregracke says that he feels a special connection with —
   A Jennifer Anderson
   B corporate sponsors
   C Huck Finn
   D war veterans

8 Which of these is the best summary of the article?
   A As a teenager Chad Pregracke spent summers diving for mussels with his father in the Mississippi River. As Pregracke grew older, his opinion about the river began to change. He now understands that the Mississippi River must be protected.
   B Chad Pregracke has found a startling array of objects in the Mississippi River: jugs of pesticide, propane tanks, artificial limbs, lawn mowers, and other debris. He uses a forklift on his barge to sort the different items into piles for recycling. He decorates his barges with the logos of his corporate sponsors.
   C Troubled by the pollution in U.S. waterways, Chad Pregracke has set out to raise money for the beautification and restoration of rivers. He has learned the value of a good public-relations campaign. Among his influential friends and sources of inspiration is Robert Kennedy, Jr.
   D Chad Pregracke is on a quest to remove garbage from the Mississippi River. After initially working alone to remove tons of junk from the river, Pregracke now has several assistants, barges and equipment, and corporate funding to enable him to spend summers removing river debris. His goal is to clean up the major rivers in the United States.
9 Which of these quotations suggests a primary theme in the article?

A “There was an opportunity for me to make a difference.”
B ...Pregracke began to enlarge upon his ambitions.
C He knows the value of modern public relations.
D “It’s hard work, but it’s fun work,” ...
11. The author sees a similarity between Pregracke’s Adopt a Mississippi Mile program and —

A. beach-cleanup programs  
B. wildlife-preservation programs  
C. tree-conservation programs  
D. highway-beautification programs

12. In paragraph 1, the author uses incomplete sentences to —

A. emphasize the types of equipment used by residents along the Mississippi River  
B. highlight the distance from St. Louis to Dubuque  
C. emphasize the various types of trash dumped in the Mississippi River  
D. provide information about the number of people living on the houseboat
Use “The Beggar” and “Meet the New Huck” to answer questions 13 and 14.

13 Both Pregracke’s and Olga’s efforts are examples of —
   A  self-sacrifice
   B  self-righteousness
   C  self-reliance
   D  self-promotion

14 The authors of both selections most likely intended to —
   A  convince the reader to preserve the environment
   B  entertain the reader with stories about unusual people
   C  remind readers that most people are capable of change
   D  inspire readers to take responsibility for positive change

Objective 3
Use the visual representation on page 9 to answer questions 15 and 16.

15 The photograph in the announcement suggests that —

A most people are reluctant to ask for help
B very few people are qualified to help others
C both helpers and those who are helped can share a success
D helping someone is difficult

16 Which of these best describes the primary message of the announcement?

A A small contribution can yield large results.
B Great achievements begin with self-reliance.
C A change in attitude can make all the difference.
D Financial resources can solve most problems.
17 How does Lushkoff change from the beginning to the end of the story? Support your answer with evidence from the selection.

Objective 2

18 Do you think that Pregracke in “Meet the New Huck” is a hero? Explain your answer and support it with evidence from the selection.

Objective 3

19 In what ways are Olga in “The Beggar” and Chad Pregracke in “Meet the New Huck” positive role models? Support your answer with evidence from both selections.

Objective 3
WRITTEN COMPOSITION

Write an essay describing a situation in which one person inspired others to change.

The information in the box below will help you remember what you should think about when you write your composition.

REMEMBER—YOU SHOULD

❑ write about the assigned topic
❑ make your writing thoughtful and interesting
❑ make sure that each sentence you write contributes to your composition as a whole
❑ make sure that your ideas are clear and easy for the reader to follow
❑ write about your ideas in depth so that the reader is able to develop a good understanding of what you are saying
❑ proofread your writing to correct errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure
John wrote a paper about a pair of best friends who changed the world. Read John’s paper and think about the corrections and improvements he should make. When you finish reading, answer the multiple-choice questions that follow.

Paul and Bill’s Story

(1) In the fall of 1968, two boys were attending Lakeside School, a private secondary school in Seattle. (2) They soon met and discovered that they have common interests in math and electronics. (3) The boys, Paul and Bill, became the best of friends. (4) This friendship changed both of them—and virtually everyone else on the planet.

(5) Some children spend their free time shooting hoops or riding bikes, others enjoy reading, camping, or playing an instrument. (6) Paul and Bill spent their free time trying to understand how computers work. (7) At that time the computer age was just beginning. (8) Lakeside School was one of the only schools in Seattle that had a computer for students to use. (9) Computer excess was set up through a machine that was connected by a phone line to a mainframe computer. (10) Paul and Bill were among a handful of students who were interested in exploring the possibilities of the computer. (11) As the boys learned new programming languages and traded ideas, they could not have known how dramatic their actions would affect the future.

(12) In today’s homes, libraries, and offices, many people use desktop computers to conduct business and to communicate with family members and friends. (13) Many schools now have labs with dozens of personal computers for students to use. (14) Do you know who first envisioned the desktop computers
It was the two friends from Lakeside School, Paul Allen and Bill Gates. With imagination, spirit, and a great deal of computer savvy, the two friends studied and experimented, eventually becoming the founders of the Microsoft Corporation.

Has it ever occurred to you that the schemes you and your friends are contemplating today could someday change the world. Paul and Bill's story is proof of this possibility. Therefore, it is important for you to believe in yourself and follow your dreams, no matter how outrageous they may seem.

You just might come up with an idea, and the idea might affect everyone on the planet.
1 What change, if any, should be made in sentence 2?
A Insert a comma after met
B Change discovered to discovered
C Change have to had
D Make no change

2 What revision, if any, is needed in sentence 5?
A Some children spend their free time shooting hoops or riding bikes or enjoying reading or camping or playing an instrument.
B Some children spend their free time. Shooting hoops, riding bikes, or enjoying reading, camping, or playing an instrument.
C Some children spend their free time shooting hoops or riding bikes; others enjoy reading, camping, or playing an instrument.
D No revision is needed.

3 What transition should be added to the beginning of sentence 8?
A Finally
B Instead
C On the other hand
D In fact

4 What change, if any, should be made in sentence 9?
A Change excess to access
B Change was set up to were set up
C Change that to it
D Make no change

5 What change, if any, should be made in sentence 11?
A Delete the comma
B Insert never after have
C Change dramatic to dramatically
D Make no change

6 What change, if any, should be made in sentence 12?
A Change todays to today's
B Insert a comma after business
C Change communicate to comunicate
D Make no change
7 What change should be made in sentence 14?

A Change who to whom
B Change envisioned to envisioned
C Change are to is
D Change the question mark to an exclamation point

8 What revision, if any, is needed in sentence 16?

A With imagination, spirit, and a great deal of computer savvy. The two friends studied and experimented, eventually becoming the founders of the Microsoft Corporation.
B With imagination, spirit, and a great deal of computer savvy, the two friends studied and experimented, they eventually became the founders of the Microsoft Corporation.
C With imagination, spirit, and a great deal of computer savvy, the two friends studied and experimented. Eventually becoming the founders of the Microsoft Corporation.
D No revision is needed.

9 What change should be made in sentence 17?

A Change schemes to scheme's
B Change your to you're
C Change contemplating to contemplating
D Change the period to a question mark

10 What is the most effective way to rewrite sentence 20?

A You just might come up with an idea when it might affect everyone on the planet.
B You just might come up with an idea that affects everyone on the planet.
C You just might come up with an idea. Which affects everyone on the planet.
D You just might come up with an idea and to affect everyone on the planet.
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<tr>
<th>Item Number</th>
<th>Student Expectation</th>
<th>Correct Answer</th>
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| **LITERARY SELECTION**
| **OBJECTIVE 1**
| 1 | F.6 (B) | A |
| 2 | F.7 (F) | C |
| **OBJECTIVE 2**
| 3 | F.11 (F) | D |
| 4 | F.11 (D) | B |
| **OBJECTIVE 3**
| 5 | F.7 (G) | D |
| 6 | F.10 (B) | C |
| **EXPOSITORY SELECTION**
| **OBJECTIVE 1**
| 7 | F.7 (F) | D |
| 8 | F.7 (F) | D |
| **OBJECTIVE 2**
| 9 | F.10 (B) | A |
| 10 | F.11 (B) | A |
| **OBJECTIVE 3**
| 11 | F.7 (E) | D |
| 12 | F.12 (A) | C |
| **CROSSOVER ITEMS**
| 13 | F.7 (G) | A |
| 14 | F.12 (A) | D |
| **VISUAL REPRESENTATION**
| **OBJECTIVE 3**
| 15 | F.19 (B) | C |
| 16 | F.20 (B) | A |
| **OPEN-ENDED ITEMS**
| 17 | F.10 (B) | OE |
| 18 | F.10 (B) | OE |
| 19 | F.10 (B) | OE |
| **WRITING PROMPT**
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