English I Reading

Connecting Selections
Scoring Guide
April 2013
Read the next two selections and answer the questions that follow.

**Sunday Morning Early**

*by David Romtvedt*

My daughter and I paddle identical red kayaks across the lake. Pulling hard, we slip easily through the water. Far from either shore it hits me that my daughter is a young woman, and suddenly everything is a metaphor for how short a time we are granted on earth: the red boats on the blue-black water, the russet and gold of late summer’s sunburnt grasses, the empty blue sky. We stop and listen to the stillness.

I say, “It’s Sunday, and here we are in the church of the out-of-doors.” Then I wish I’d had the sense to stay quiet. That’s the trick in life—learning to leave well enough alone.

Our boats drift north to where the chirring of grasshoppers reaches us from the rocky hills. A clap of thunder beyond those hills. How well sound travels over water. I want to say just the right thing, something stronger and truer than a lame *I love you*. I want my daughter to know that, through her, I live a life that was closed to me before. I paddle up beside her, lean out from the boat, and touch her hand. I start to speak, then stop.

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I Wish I Was a Poet

from Like One of the Family
by Alice Childress

1 Marge, I wish I was a poet. . . . Now that’s no cause for you to stop stringing the beans and lookin’ at me like you was struck by lightnin’. . . . No, I don’t wish it on account of I want to be famous, but I do wish it because sometimes there are poetry things that I see and I’d like to tell people about them in a poetry way; only I don’t know how, and when I tell it, it’s just a plain flat story.

2 Well, for an instance, you know my cousin Thelma stopped in town for a few days, and she stayed at a downtown hotel. . . . Yes, I dropped by to see her last night. . . . Now, Marge, when I walked up to the desk to get her room number, all of a sudden the folks in the lobby cleared a path on both sides of me and I was about to get real salty about their attitude when I chanced to look behind me and saw two old people walkin’ up to the desk. . . .

3 No, they were white, and you’ve never seen such a couple in your life—a man and his wife, and they must have been in their seventies. They were raggedy and kinda beat. The old lady wore men’s shoes and trousers and an old battered raincoat and on her head a man’s hat. From under the hat her white hair hung in curly wisps—and she was pretty. . . .

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY—Alice Childress (1916–1994)

Alice Childress, the African American author of the short story “I Wish I Was a Poet,” was born in South Carolina but moved to Harlem when she was nine to live with her grandmother. She credits her grandmother, who had no formal education, with exposing her to a world of culture as well as instilling in her a love of storytelling and a sensitivity to class issues.

Dedicated to the art of storytelling, Childress explored a variety of methods in order to share ideas throughout her lifetime, including serving as a playwright, novelist, actor, director, and teacher.
Yes, mam, she was pretty and still she was seventy and bent and dragged her feet along instead of liftin’ them. The man was dressed just as sorry as her and in his hand he carried a paper bag. . . . Marge, he was lookin’ at her like every woman on earth dreams of bein’ looked at, and her eyes were doin’ the same thing back at him.

Honey, everyone was standin’, just starin’. There was a giggle from some kid and one well-dressed woman looked like she was goin’ to faint, but the old man walked up to the clerk with the old lady followin’ behind him and he said in a quavery voice, “We’d like a room for the night.”

Well, you could cut the silence with a knife. The clerk hemmed and hawed while they stood there lookin’ back at him real innocent and peaceful, and finally he said, “You’ll have to pay in advance.” “How much is the cheapest room?” the old man asked. The clerk breathed a little easier and said: “Three-fifty.” The old man went in his coat pocket and brought out four crumpled up dollar bills and put them on the desk.

The clerk turned red in the face and said real loud, “You can’t have a room without carryin’ baggage—where’s your baggage?” You could hear a pin drop when the old man placed the paper bag on the desk, opened it and pulled out two rough dry shirts. . . . Well, with that the clerk took the money, gave him a key and fifty cents change and said, “Top floor rear!”

The couple smiled in such a dignified way, and it seemed like they hadn’t noticed a thing. They started over toward the elevator and then the old lady turned away from the man and made her way over to the receptionist’s desk. Everyone kept their eyes dead on her, and the receptionist, who was awfully young and pretty, was almost scared out of her wits. The old lady kept makin’ straight for her, and I could see that the young lady was gonna scream any second. . . .

When the old woman reached the desk, she leaned over a bowl of red roses that was there and, ever so gently, breathed in the sweet smell, and then she turned away and quickly joined her husband at the elevator, and nobody moved until the doors closed and they were gone from sight. . . .

That’s all, Marge. Of course, there was buzzin’ and hummin’ after that, but I got to wonderin’ about who they were and where they came from . . . and did they have children . . . and how much work they both done in their lifetime . . . and what it must feel like to be old and draggin’ around in the cold.

That’s all there is to the story and it sure don’t sound like much the way I tell it, but if I was a poet, I would sing a song of praise for the love in their eyes and I would make you see the sight of a lifetime when that ragged lady bent over those roses, and I would tell how awful it is to be old and broke in the midst of plenty. . . . And that’s what I mean when I say—sometimes I wish I was a poet.
What message do you think the speaker in “Sunday Morning Early” and the narrator of “I Wish I Was a Poet” are trying to convey? Explain your answer and support it with evidence from both selections.
Score Point 0—Insufficient Response to the Question

Insufficient responses indicate a very limited reading performance.

These responses have one of the following problems.

- For one or both selections, the idea is not an answer to the question asked.
- The idea is incorrect because it is not based on one or both selections.
- For one or both selections, the idea is too general, vague, or unclear to determine whether it is reasonable.
- No idea is present from either selection. Sometimes the response contains only text evidence from one or both selections. At other times there appears to be an idea; however, this idea cannot be considered an answer to the question because it merely repeats verbatim, or “echoes,” the text evidence.
They both are writing poetry, and they also write poetry about somebody. In “Sunday Morning Early” is about a girl who is the daughter of the narrator and in “I Wish I was a poet” is about a loving old couple.

Score Point 0
The student does not answer the question asked because he does not present a message conveyed in either selection. Instead, the student presents an incorrect idea followed by a statement of what each selection is generally about.

They are trying to convey that don’t judge people how they look like the two couple on “I wish I was a poet.” The women was dressed all sagged up cloth. The men was dressed just as sorry as her. “Marge, he was lookin’ at her like every women on earth dreams of bein’ looken at, and her eyes were doin’ the same thing back at him.”

Score Point 0
The student presents a reasonable idea for “I Wish I Was a Poet” and supports the idea with relevant textual evidence. However, the response contains neither an idea nor textual evidence for “Sunday Morning Early.” Because both selections are not addressed, this response indicates a very limited reading performance.
Score Point 0
The student provides textual evidence from both selections but does not offer an idea for either. Stating that both the speaker and the narrator are trying to convey a message only repeats the question; it does not constitute an idea. Because no idea is presented, this response is insufficient.

Score Point 0
The student presents an idea that is too vague to determine whether it is reasonable.
Score Point 1—Partially Sufficient Response to the Question

Partially sufficient responses indicate a basic reading performance.

These responses have one of the following characteristics.

- The idea is reasonable for both selections, but the response contains no text evidence (from one or both selections).

- The idea is reasonable for both selections, but the text evidence (from one or both selections) is flawed and does not adequately support the idea. Text evidence is considered inadequate when it is
  - only a general reference to the text,
  - too partial to support the idea,
  - weakly linked to the idea, or
  - used inappropriately because it wrongly manipulates the meaning of the text.

- For one or both selections, the idea needs more explanation or specificity even though it is supported with text evidence from both selections.

- For one or both selections, the idea represents only a literal reading of the text, with or without text evidence (from one or both selections).

- The response contains relevant textual evidence from both selections, but the student offers an idea that is reasonable for only one selection.

- The response contains an idea and relevant text evidence for both selections, but the idea for one selection contains an inaccuracy.
Score Point 1
The student offers the idea that the speaker and the narrator are trying to tell or say something and supports it with textual evidence. However, the idea needs more explanation to be considered reasonable. Therefore, this response represents a basic reading performance.

Score Point 1
The student presents the reasonable idea that the speaker and the narrator convey the message that human emotions can be so strong that words cannot describe them. Although the analysis is clear and reasonable, the student provides no textual support, making this response only partially sufficient.
Score Point 1
The student offers an idea that addresses only “Sunday Morning Early.” The idea is reasonable and is supported with textual evidence from that selection. The student provides relevant textual evidence from “I Wish I Was a Poet” but no corresponding idea. Responses that contain relevant textual evidence from both selections but a reasonable idea for only one selection indicate that the student’s reading performance is basic.

Score Point 1
The student offers the reasonable idea that both the speaker and the narrator are trying to convey the message that true love must be demonstrated rather than spoken. Relevant textual evidence from “Sunday Morning Early” fully supports the idea because the quotation provided indicates that the speaker doesn’t want to use the same “lame” words to show his love for his daughter. However, the textual evidence provided to support the idea for “I Wish I Was a Poet” is flawed because it is only weakly linked to the idea. The quotation provided merely describes the old couple and does not address how love is communicated. Because the idea is not supported with relevant text from both selections, the response is partially sufficient.
Score Point 2—Sufficient Response to the Question

Sufficient responses indicate a satisfactory reading performance.

These responses have the following characteristics.

- For both selections, the idea is reasonable and goes beyond a literal reading of the text. It is explained specifically enough to show that the student can make appropriate connections across the selections and draw valid conclusions.
- For both selections, the text evidence that is used to support the idea is accurate and relevant.
- For both selections, the idea and text evidence used to support it are clearly linked.
- For both selections, the combination of the idea and the text evidence demonstrates a good understanding of the text.
Score Point 2
The student offers a reasonable idea for each selection: for “Sunday Morning Early,” the message is that life goes by fast, and for “I Wish I Was a Poet,” the message is that even poor people can be in love. Relevant textual evidence is provided from both selections, making this a sufficient response.

Score Point 2
The student offers the idea that both the speaker and the narrator wish they had the right words to express how they felt in each circumstance. The idea is specific and reasonable and demonstrates the student’s ability to make appropriate connections across the selections. The student also supports this idea with a direct quotation from each selection. This response represents a satisfactory reading performance.
Score Point 2
In this sufficient response, the student offers the idea that some things are better left unsaid. This idea is reasonable for both selections and clearly linked to the direct quotations that are used to support it.

Score Point 2
The student offers the reasonable idea that both the speaker and the narrator convey the message that people should love the little things in life. The idea shows that the student can make appropriate connections across the selections. Relevant textual evidence from each selection sufficiently supports the idea. This response demonstrates a good understanding of the texts.
Score Point 3—Exemplary Response to the Question

Exemplary responses indicate an accomplished reading performance.

These responses have the following characteristics.

- For both selections, the idea is perceptive and reflects an awareness of the complexities of the text. The student is able to develop a coherent explanation of the idea by making discerning connections across both selections.

- For both selections, the text evidence that is used to support the idea is specific and well chosen. Overall, the evidence strongly supports the validity of the idea.

- For both selections, the combination of the idea and the text evidence demonstrates a deep understanding of the text.
Score Point 3

In this exemplary response, the student offers the perceptive idea that sometimes it is difficult to find the right words when you feel passionate about something. Specific, well-chosen textual evidence is provided to strongly support the validity of the idea, reflecting the student’s deep understanding of the selections.

Score Point 3

The student presents the reasonable idea that both the speaker and the narrator convey the message that sometimes things can be hard to say. Additional analysis extends the idea and demonstrates the student’s ability to make discerning connections across the selections. Well-chosen textual evidence strongly supports the validity of the idea.
Score Point 3
The student demonstrates an accomplished reading performance by developing a coherent explanation of how both the speaker and the narrator convey the message that love can be expressed better by actions than by words. The combination of this idea and well-chosen text evidence from each selection demonstrates a deep understanding of the selections.

Score Point 3
The student presents the reasonable idea that both the speaker and the narrator convey the message that they are unable to communicate the way they want. Further explanation of the idea is perceptive and reflects an awareness of the complexities of the texts. Well-chosen text evidence strongly supports the validity of the idea. This response represents an accomplished reading performance.