



**ROBERT L. MERRITT MIDDLE SCHOOL**

# 9<sup>TH</sup> Grade Learn-At-Home Packet

## Reading

Week 2

Read the text. Then answer the questions.

## from *The Histories* by Herodotus

*In the following excerpt, King Xerxes of ancient Persia discusses the human condition with his uncle and adviser, Artabanus, just before the Persians invade Greece.*

And now, as he looked and saw the whole Hellespont covered with the vessels of his fleet, and all the shore and every plain about Abydos as full as possible of men, Xerxes congratulated himself on his good fortune; but after a little while he wept.

Then Artabanus, the king's uncle (the same who at the first so freely spake his mind to the king, and advised him not to lead his army against Greece), when he heard that Xerxes was in tears, went to him, and said:

"How different, sire, is what thou art now doing, from what thou didst a little while ago! Then thou didst congratulate thyself; and now, behold! thou weapest."

"There came upon me," replied he, "a sudden pity, when I thought of the shortness of man's life, and considered that of all this host, so numerous as it is, not one will be alive when a hundred years are gone by."

"And yet there are sadder things in life than that," returned the other. "Short as our time is, there is no man, whether it be here among this multitude or elsewhere, who is so happy, as not to have felt the wish—I will not say once, but full many a time—that he were dead rather than alive. Calamities fall upon us; sicknesses vex and harass us, and make life, short though it be, to appear long. So death, through the wretchedness of our life, is a most sweet refuge to our race: and God, who gives us the tastes that we enjoy of pleasant times, is seen, in his very gift, to be envious."

"True," said Xerxes; "human life is even such as thou hast painted it, O Artabanus! But for this very reason let us turn our thoughts from it, and not dwell on what is so sad, when pleasant things are in hand. Tell me rather, if the vision which we saw had not appeared so plainly to thyself, wouldst thou have been still of the same mind as formerly, and have continued to dissuade me from warring against Greece, or wouldst thou at this time think differently? Come now, tell me this honestly."

"O king!" replied the other, "may the dream which hath appeared to us have such issue as we both desire! For my own part, I am still full of fear, and have scarcely power to control myself, when I consider all our dangers, and especially when I see that the two things which are of most consequence are alike opposed to thee."

"Thou strange man!" said Xerxes in reply—"what, I pray thee, are the two things thou speakest of? Does my land army seem to thee too small in number, and will the Greeks, thinkest thou, bring into the field a more numerous host? Or is it our fleet which thou deemest weaker than theirs? Or art thou fearful on both accounts? If in thy judgment we fall short in either respect, it were easy to bring together with all speed another armament."

"O king!" said Artabanus, "it is not possible that a man of understanding should find fault with the size of thy army or the number of thy ships. The more thou addest to these, the more hostile will those two things, whereof I spake, become. Those two things are the land and the sea. In all the wide sea there is not, I imagine, anywhere a harbour large enough to receive thy vessels, in case a storm arise, and afford them a sure protection. And yet thou wilt want, not one such harbour only, but many in succession, along the entire coast by which thou art about to make thy advance. In default then of such harbours, it is well to bear in mind that chances rule men, and not men chances. Such is the first of the two dangers; and now I will speak to thee of the second. The land will also be thine enemy; for if no one resists thy advance, as thou proceedest farther and farther, insensibly allured onwards (for who is ever sated with success?), thou wilt find it more and more hostile. I mean this, that, should nothing else withstand thee, yet the mere distance, becoming greater as time goes on, will at last produce a famine. Methinks it is best for men, when they take counsel, to be timorous, and imagine all possible calamities, but when the time for action comes, then to deal boldly."

Where to Xerxes answered—"There is reason, O Artabanus! in everything which thou hast said; but I pray thee, fear not all things alike, nor count up every risk. For if in each matter that comes before us thou wilt look to all possible chances, never wilt thou achieve anything. Far better is it to have a stout heart always, and suffer one's share of evils, than to be ever fearing what may happen, and never incur a mischance. Moreover, if thou wilt oppose whatever is said by others, without thyself showing us the sure course which we ought to take, thou art as likely to lead us into failure as they who advise differently; for thou art but on a par with them. And as for that sure course, how canst thou show it us when thou art but a man? I do not believe thou canst. Success for the most part attends those who act boldly, not those who weigh everything, and are slack to venture. Thou seest to how great a height the power of Persia has now reached—never would it have grown to this point if they who sat upon the throne before me had been like-minded with thee, or even, though not like-minded, had listened to councillors of such a spirit. 'Twas by brave ventures that they extended their sway; for great empires can only be conquered by great risks. We follow then the example of our fathers in making this march; and we set forward at the best season of the year; so, when we have brought Europe under us, we shall return, without suffering from want or experiencing any other calamity. For while on the one hand we carry vast stores of provisions with us, on the other we shall have the grain of all the countries and nations that we attack; since our march is not directed against a pastoral people, but against men who are tillers of the ground."



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- 1 Read the paragraph from the text.

"And yet there are sadder things in life than that," returned the other. "Short as our time is, there is no man, whether it be here among this multitude or elsewhere, who is so happy, as not to have felt the wish—I will not say once, but full many a time—that he were dead rather than alive. Calamities fall upon us; sicknesses vex and harass us, and make life, short though it be, to appear long. So death, through the wretchedness of our life, is a most sweet refuge to our race: and God, who gives us the tastes that we enjoy of pleasant times, is seen, in his very gift, to be envious."

Which statement **best** describes Artabanus's main claim?

- (A) God is envious of human beings.
- (B) Death is actually a gift from God.
- (C) Life is inevitably merciless and brief.
- (D) Life is full of disasters and hardships.

- 2 According to Artabanus in the ninth paragraph, what do the Persians have most to fear? Select **two** options.

- (A) a mutiny
- (B) a famine
- (C) enemy spies
- (D) a storm at sea
- (E) an earthquake
- (F) infectious disease

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- 3** This question has two parts. First, answer part A. Then, answer part B.

**Part A** Which statement from the tenth paragraph **best** expresses Xerxes's central idea?

- (A)** "... thou art as likely to lead us into failure as they who advise differently ..."
- (B)** "'And as for that sure course, how canst thou show it us when thou art but a man?'"
- (C)** "'Success for the most part attends those who act boldly, not those who weigh everything, and are slack to venture.'"
- (D)** "'We follow then the example of our fathers in making this march ...'"

**Part B** Which detail from the passage supports your answer in part A?

- (A)** the favorable season of the year for travel
- (B)** the great height of power Persia has reached
- (C)** people's readiness to suffer their share of evils
- (D)** the vast stores of provisions carried on the expedition

- 4 Underline the sentence that **best** expresses the reason for Xerxes's opinion of Artabanus's views.

Where to Xerxes answered—"There is reason, O Artabanus! In everything which thou hast said; but I pray thee, fear not all things alike, nor count up every risk. For if in each matter that comes before us thou wilt look to all possible chances, never wilt thou achieve anything. Far better is it to have a stout heart always, and suffer one's share of evils, than to be ever fearing what may happen, and never incur a mischance. Moreover, if thou wilt oppose whatever is said by others, without thyself showing us the sure course which we ought to take, thou art as likely to lead us into failure as they who advise differently; for thou art but on a par with them. And as for that sure course, how canst thou show it us when thou art but a man? I do not believe thou canst. Success for the most part attends those who act boldly, not those who weigh everything, and are slack to venture. Thou seest to how great a height the power of Persia has now reached—never would it have grown to this point if they who sat upon the throne before me had been like-minded with thee, or even, though not like-minded, had listened to councillors of such a spirit. 'Twas by brave ventures that they extended their sway; for great empires can only be conquered by great risks. We follow then the example of our fathers in making this march; and we set forward at the best season of the year; so, when we have brought Europe under us, we shall return, without suffering from want or experiencing any other calamity. For while on the one hand we carry vast stores of provisions with us, on the other we shall have the grain of all the countries and nations that we attack; since our march is not directed against a pastoral people, but against men who are tillers of the ground."

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- 5 Which phrase from the text **best** helps the reader understand the meaning of the word calamities?
- (A) "... there are sadder things in life ..."
  - (B) "... sicknesses vex and harass us ..."
  - (C) "... a most sweet refuge to our race ..."
  - (D) "... God, who gives us the tastes that we enjoy ..."
- 6 This question has two parts. First, answer part A. Then, answer part B.

**Part A** Read the sentences from the text.

"In default then of such harbours, it is well to bear in mind that chances rule men, and not men chances. Such is the first of the two dangers; and now I will speak to thee of the second. The land will also be thine enemy; for if no one resists thy advance, as thou proceedest farther and farther, insensibly allured onwards (for who is ever sated with success?), thou wilt find it more and more hostile. I mean this, that, should nothing else withstand thee, yet the mere distance, becoming greater as time goes on, will at last produce a famine. Methinks it is best for men, when they take counsel, to be timorous, and imagine all possible calamities, but when the time for action comes, then to deal boldly."

Select the word that **best** defines allured as it is used in the sentences.

- (A) directed
- (B) dragged
- (C) restrained
- (D) tempted

**Part B** Which phrase from the text **best** supports your answer in part A?

- (A) "... for if no one resists thy advance ..."
- (B) "... proceedest farther and farther ..."
- (C) "... ever sated with success.."
- (D) "... find it more and more hostile."



Read the text. Then answer the questions.

## from *Ethan Frome*

by Edith Wharton

*In the following excerpt, Ethan Frome and his young cousin Mattie Silver chat after supper while Ethan's wife Zeena is away from home.*

They finished supper, and while Mattie cleared the table Ethan went to look at the cows and then took a last turn about the house. . .

When he returned to the kitchen Mattie had pushed up his chair to the stove and seated herself near the lamp with a bit of sewing. The scene was just as he had dreamed of it that morning. He sat down, drew his pipe from his pocket and stretched his feet to the glow. His hard day's work in the keen air made him feel at once lazy and light of mood, and he had a confused sense of being in another world, where all was warmth and harmony and time could bring no change. The only drawback to his complete wellbeing was the fact that he could not see Mattie from where he sat; but he was too indolent to move and after a moment he said: "Come over here and sit by the stove."

Zeena's empty rocking-chair stood facing him. Mattie rose obediently, and seated herself in it. As her young brown head detached itself against the patch-work cushion that habitually framed his wife's gaunt countenance, Ethan had a momentary shock. It was almost as if the other face, the face of the superseded woman, had obliterated that of the intruder. After a moment Mattie seemed to be affected by the same sense of constraint. She changed her position, leaning forward to bend her head above her work, so that he saw only the foreshortened tip of her nose and the streak of red in her hair; then she slipped to her feet, saying "I can't see to sew," and went back to her chair by the lamp.

Ethan made a pretext of getting up to replenish the stove, and when he returned to his seat he pushed it sideways that he might get a view of her profile and of the lamplight falling on her hands. . .

Deep quiet sank on the room. The clock ticked above the dresser, a piece of charred wood fell now and then in the stove, and the faint sharp scent of the geraniums mingled with the odour of Ethan's smoke, which began to throw a blue haze about the lamp and to hang its greyish cobwebs in the shadowy corners of the room.

All constraint had vanished between the two, and they began to talk easily and simply. They spoke of everyday things . . . The commonplace nature of what they said produced in Ethan an illusion of long-established intimacy which no outburst of emotion could have given, and he set his imagination adrift on the fiction that they had always spent their evenings thus and would always go on doing so . . .

"This is the night we were to have gone coasting, Matt," he said at length, with the rich sense, as he spoke, that they could go on any other night they chose, since they had all time before them.

She smiled back at him. "I guess you forgot!"

"No, I didn't forget; but it's as dark as Egypt outdoors. We might go to-morrow if there's a moon."

She laughed with pleasure, her head tilted back, the lamplight sparkling on her lips and teeth. "That would be lovely, Ethan!"

He kept his eyes fixed on her, marvelling at the way her face changed with each turn of their talk, like a wheat-field under a summer breeze. It was intoxicating to find such magic in his clumsy words, and he longed to try new ways of using it.

"Would you be scared to go down the Corbury road with me on a night like this?" he asked.

Her cheeks burned redder. "I ain't any more scared than you are!"

"Well, I'd be scared, then; I wouldn't do it. That's an ugly corner down by the big elm. If a fellow didn't keep his eyes open he'd go plumb into it." He luxuriated in the sense of protection and authority which his words conveyed. To prolong and intensify the feeling he added: "I guess we're well enough here."

She let her lids sink slowly, in the way he loved. "Yes, we're well enough here," she sighed.

Her tone was so sweet that he took the pipe from his mouth and drew his chair up to the table. Leaning forward, he touched the farther end of the strip of brown stuff that she was hemming. "Say, Matt," he began with a smile, "what do you think I saw under the Varnum spruces, coming along home just now? I saw a friend of yours getting kissed."

The words had been on his tongue all the evening, but now that he had spoken them they struck him as inexpressibly vulgar and out of place.

Mattie blushed to the roots of her hair and pulled her needle rapidly twice or thrice through her work, insensibly drawing the end of it away from him. "I suppose it was Ruth and Ned," she said in a low voice, as though he had suddenly touched on something grave.

Ethan had imagined that his allusion might open the way to the accepted pleasantries, and these perhaps in turn to a harmless caress, if only a mere touch on her hand. But now he felt as if her blush had set a flaming guard about her. He supposed it was his natural awkwardness that made him feel so. He knew that most young men made nothing at all of giving a pretty girl a kiss, and he remembered that the night before, when he had put his arm about Mattie, she had not resisted. But that had been out-of-doors, under the open irresponsible night. Now, in the warm lamp-lit room, with all its ancient implications of conformity and order, she seemed infinitely farther away from him and more unapproachable.

To ease his constraint he said: "I suppose they'll be setting a date before long."

"Yes. I shouldn't wonder if they got married some time along in the summer." She pronounced the word married as if her voice caressed it. It seemed a rustling covert leading to enchanted glades. A pang shot through Ethan, and he said, twisting away from her in his chair: "It'll be your turn next, I wouldn't wonder." She laughed a little uncertainly. "Why do you keep on saying that?"

He echoed her laugh. "I guess I do it to get used to the idea."



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- 7 Which statement from the text **best** helps to develop the theme that personal relationships are important to happiness?
- (A) "The commonplace nature of what they said produced in Ethan an illusion of long-established intimacy which no outburst of emotion could have given, and he set his imagination adrift on the fiction that they had spent their evenings thus and would always go on doing so . . ."
  - (B) "She laughed with pleasure, her head tilted back, the lamplight sparkling on her lips and teeth."
  - (C) "He kept his eyes fixed on her, marveling at the way her face changed with each turn of their talk, like a wheat-field under a summer breeze."
  - (D) "She let her lids sink slowly, in the way he loved. 'Yes, we're well enough here,' she sighed."

- 8 This question has two parts. First, answer part A. Then, answer part B.

**Part A** Which conclusion about Ethan's basic nature is supported by the text?

- (A) He is hasty and selfish.
- (B) He is imaginative and shy.
- (C) He is poised and intelligent.
- (D) He is ambitious and superficial.

**Part B** Which detail from the text **best** supports your answer in part A?

- (A) "Ethan made a pretext of getting up . . . and when he returned to his seat he pushed it sideways that he might get a view of her profile and of the lamplight falling on her hands . . ."
- (B) "'This is the night we were to have gone coasting, Matt,' he said at length, with the rich sense, as he spoke, that they could go on any other night they chose . . ."
- (C) "It was intoxicating to find such magic in his clumsy words, and he longed to try new ways of using it."
- (D) "He luxuriated in the sense of protection and authority which his words conveyed."



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- 9 Read the excerpt from the text and the directions that follow.

All constraint had vanished between the two, and they began to talk easily and simply. They spoke of every-day things . . . The commonplace nature of what they said produced in Ethan an illusion of long-established intimacy which no outburst of emotion could have given, and he set his imagination adrift on the fiction that they had always spent their evenings thus and would always go on doing so . . .

Which words **best** define constraint? Select **two** options.

- (A) competition
- (B) hesitation
- (C) humiliation
- (D) limitation
- (E) restriction
- (F) seclusion

- 10 Underline the word that **best** indicates the meaning of conformity.

But that had been out-of-doors, under the open irresponsible night. Now, in the warm lamplit room, with all its ancient implications of conformity and order, she seemed infinitely farther away from him and more unapproachable.

Read the texts. Then answer the questions.

## Winter Break

*In this story, a change in a reading assignment leads to a discussion about literature.*

*"Well, this is a surprise . . ."*

Manuel was not expecting to see his father in the parking lot waiting for him. He walked over and gave him a hug. "What are you doing here, Dad?"

"I knew you'd appreciate not having to take the bus home on your last day before winter break," Mr. Ramos said. "And I don't start work until 5, so I thought we could walk home together. Here, give me your backpack and let Mr. Kumar know that you'll be going with me today." Manuel walked over to the assistant principal, who, after he and Manuel had spoken, waved to Mr. Ramos. Manuel and his father started across the playing field toward Ridenour Road, which would take them home.

"Two weeks off . . . that's a lot of free time. What are you going to do first?" Mr. Ramos asked.

"I'm not exactly sure, Dad, but I do have a number of video games I've neglected while finishing up my school work; those are near the top of the list," Manuel joked.

"I think you chose the right thing to prioritize, Manuel," Mr. Ramos said, "although the electric company is probably disappointed that your system wasn't powered on 24/7. How about a reading list? What are you going to try to finish during the break?"

"I still have that box set of graphic novels *abuela* bought me for my birthday. I can definitely get through those."

"Actually, I was thinking about the novel you'll be reading next semester. I have to admit, I was excited when I saw it on the reading list Ms. Prenty emailed to us at the start of the year. It's the same book I read when I was in ninth grade and doing my first novel study. I went to the library and found a copy to check out; I was hoping you and I could read it during the break and talk about it before school started up. It's been years since I picked it up, but I still remember the plot and how much I enjoyed reading it."

"Oh," Manuel said and stopped, "I think you might have missed one of Ms. Prenty's emails or Mom might have forgotten to tell you. We're doing this novel instead." Manuel reached into the backpack his father was carrying, pulled out a paperback, and handed it to his father.

Mr. Ramos recognized the title; he also had read it during high school. It was a novel from the early twentieth century about an English family and the lead-up to the First World War. It was the author's second novel, and she had gone on to have an acclaimed career, winning many literary awards and showing up on reading lists in high schools and colleges.

"There's nothing wrong with this book, Manuel," Mr. Ramos said, "but why did they switch?"

"I'm not positive, Dad," Manuel replied, "but I think it's because there were some complaints."

"Okay, that's what I figured," Mr. Ramos said. He put the book away and started walking toward home again.

After a few moments, Mr. Ramos spoke. "You and your class will enjoy the new assigned book, Manuel, and I'm sure you'll get much out of it, but the original book is so much richer! And its setting will connect to what you're learning in social studies this year about American history. What issues did people raise?"

"There are two that everyone mentioned, Dad," Manuel said. "One is that some of the characters in the novel are stereotypes."

"That's true," Mr. Ramos said, "but the novel really makes it clear how harmful it is to accept these stereotypes. As you read through the novel, you see how much better off the main character is when he comes to understand this."

"The other big thing, Dad, is that offensive language is used."

"That's true as well, but the author makes a point to present characters using this language as small-minded and hypocritical. There's one character who makes long-winded speeches in public about how 'decent' he is and how he can identify other 'decent' people. But the horrible things he says in private show more about who he really than any of his speeches. At the end of the book, the main character makes a point to say that his experience with such 'decent' people taught him never again to prejudge anyone."

"Dad," Manuel said, "I know the novel has a great reputation, and a lot of people argue for it like you have. But I wouldn't want anyone in my class to feel offended when we're discussing it in class. I think that's a good reason to avoid it."

"Manuel," Mr. Ramos replied, "I think your class is missing a real learning opportunity. Ms. Prentz would make sure all the students are prepared for the harsher parts of the book, and she would point out that the language used in the book is not okay to use now."



"So, are you going to email Ms. Prenty during break?" Manuel asked.

"You definitely seem passionate about this, Dad!"

"I'm not sure, Manuel," Mr. Ramos said. "Maybe I'll post something on the school's message board or talk to your principal, Ms. Glean."

As they reached the front door, Manuel pulled out his keys and inserted the one with the blue tape into the lock. "If you're serious about this, Dad, I think you might want to check out the latest school newsletter; I heard kids talking about it at lunch, and it sounds like there's something that addresses why the change was made."

## Curriculum Notes: 9th Grade

*The following excerpt is from a school newsletter sent to parents and guardians.*

Our ninth-graders will be reading a novel during the 3rd quarter of the school year. In the first two quarters, students focused on short stories and read Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* in the literary sections of their English Language Arts classes. Our school has used this approach to great success in the past. By having students study plot, character development, theme, language use, and setting in these more concentrated texts, we have found students are better prepared to handle a novel's larger scope.

As many of you know, there was a recent change in the ninth-grade reading list for the year. The novel students were going to use has been replaced with a different book by a different author. I would like to address why this change was made and why we feel it was the correct choice.

I have heard from a number of parents who asked whether the school was pressured to alter the reading list. Let me assure you that this was an internal decision made by the school's curriculum and instruction team. We did receive complaints, but these did not lead us to make the change.

No one can argue that the book our ninth-graders were going to read isn't controversial. It often uses language that is not appropriate today and employs offensive stereotypes. The school's instructors and administrators decided that although the book is an established classic, it would be more profitable for students to use a different book. The amount of time teachers would need to spend providing context around the controversial issues was felt to be a great distraction.

Our ninth-graders have one specific section of their English Language Arts classes dedicated to the novel. For many of them, it is the first classroom interaction they will have with a longer piece featuring multiple characters and multiple plotlines.



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The book they now will be reading also is an established classic, and it has been used by many schools as an initial text for the study of the novel. We feel that this book will fulfill all the expectations we have related to novel study (helping students better understand how a novel is different from short stories and plays, how actions and settings are connected, and so on). And it will accomplish this without taking time away from instruction to debate what is or is not offensive.

If you have still have any questions about this decision, please contact your child's teacher or call or email me at the school.

**Answer these questions about "Winter Break."**

- 11** What theme is emphasized in Mr. Ramos's argument about the reading list change? Support your answer using details from the text.

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- 12** What assumption can be made based on details in the text?
- (A)** Manuel is an excellent student.
  - (B)** Mr. Ramos is engaged in Manuel's schoolwork.
  - (C)** Manuel is unhappy with Mr. Ramos's opinions.
  - (D)** Mr. Ramos is a literature professor.
- 13** Which sentences from the text support Mr. Ramos's view about changing the reading list? Select **two** sentences.
- (A)** "'It's been years since I picked it up, but I still remember the plot and how much I enjoyed reading it.'"
  - (B)** "'There's nothing wrong with this book, Manuel,' Mr. Ramos said, 'but why did they switch?'"
  - (C)** "'You and your class will enjoy the new assigned book, Manuel, and I'm sure you'll get much out of it, but the original book is so much richer!'"
  - (D)** "'There's one character who makes long-winded speeches in public about how 'decent' he is and how he can identify other 'decent' people.'"
  - (E)** "'Manuel,' Mr. Ramos replied, 'I think your class is missing a real learning opportunity.'"
- 14** This question has two parts. First, answer part A. Then, answer part B.

**Part A** Read the sentences from the text.

Mr. Ramos recognized the title; he also had read it during high school. It was a novel from the early twentieth century about an English family and the lead-up to the First World War. It was the author's second novel, and she had gone on to have an acclaimed career, winning many literary awards and showing up on reading lists in high schools and colleges.

What is the meaning of the word acclaimed?

- (A)** lucky                      **(B)** lengthy                      **(C)** damaged                      **(D)** celebrated

**Part B** Which phrase from the passage supports your answer in part A?

- (A)** "... during high school ..."
- (B)** "... the lead-up to the First World War ..."
- (C)** "... the author's second novel ..."
- (D)** "... winning many literary awards ..."

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- 15** Read the sentences from the text.

"I think you chose the right thing to prioritize, Manuel," Mr. Ramos said, "although the electric company is probably disappointed that your system wasn't powered on 24/7."

What tone does the author suggest with this response?

- ☐ **A** annoyed
- ☐ **B** playful
- ☐ **C** proud
- ☐ **D** upset

Answer these questions about the excerpt from the school newsletter.

- 16** What is the point of view and purpose of the text and how does the author support these?

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- 17** This question has two parts. First, answer part A. Then, answer part B.

**Part A** What is the main idea of the text?

- (A)** The school has decided to alter the reading list based on feedback from the community.
- (B)** The school has decided to alter the reading list because the new novel is more respected than the previous novel choice.
- (C)** The school has decided to alter the reading list because the new novel is a better instructional fit than the previous novel choice.
- (D)** The school has decided to alter the reading list based on outside pressures and complaints.

**Part B** What detail from the text **best** supports your answer in part A?

- (A)** "I have heard from a number of parents who asked whether the school was pressured to alter the reading list."
- (B)** "No one can argue that the book our ninth-graders were going to read isn't controversial."
- (C)** "The book they now will be reading also is an established classic, and it has been used by many schools as an initial text for the study of the novel."
- (D)** "And it will accomplish this without taking time away from instruction to debate what is or is not offensive."



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- 18** Which text makes a more compelling argument about the change to the reading list? Explain why, and support your answer with evidence from **each** text.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

## Argumentative Performance Task

### Task

You have been learning about writing a literary analysis in class. Literary analysis is a form of argumentative writing, since you must express a thesis statement and then present textual evidence to support it. You will write a literary analysis about the importance of relationships between family members and between friends based on two selections presented below.

Before you begin, briefly scan the stories and the three questions that follow in Part 1. Then, go back and read the literary selections carefully to gain the facts and insights you will need to answer these questions. After you have read the selections carefully, prepare your answers to the three questions.

In Part 2, you will be presented with a prompt about comparing and contrasting the themes, characters, and text structures of the selections. Based on the stories you have read and your thoughts about them, you will write your own literary analysis.

### Directions for Part 1

You will now read two literary selections about relationships between family members and between friends. You can re-examine both selections as often as you like.

### Research Questions

After reading the two literary selections, use the remaining time in Part 1 to answer three questions about them. Your answers to these questions will be scored. Also, your answers will help you think about the literary selections you have read, which should help you write your own literary analysis.

You may refer to the literary selections when you think it would be helpful. You may also refer to your notes. Answer the questions in the space provided.

## Story #1: Grandpa's Badge of Courage

Raskin's General Store had stood at the center of town for decades. Over the years, it had served the people of Redville well, providing basic foodstuffs, essential household goods, and even some useful—if not particularly fashionable—clothing. Besides these necessities, Raskin's offered the town's residents another essential: a place to hang out and discuss the latest news and retell favorite stories, again and again and, if there happened to be little that was new or noteworthy, yet again.

One late afternoon, on an especially hot summer day, a half-dozen of the town's senior men were fanning themselves with newspapers while recounting events from their youth. Each man had heard the others' stories many times, but that did not prevent them from being interested and even egging on some particular member of the group to take his turn. Often, this was done with impeccable timing and always with the intention of making sure that each man got his turn.

"Hey John, why don't you tell us about your first day as a coward in Vietnam," laughed Bob Nerrida. "I bet your grandson here never heard that one." The old man smiled at Tommy, who was playing with some model cars on the wood-plank floor near the counter. The boy looked up, squinted his eyes, and pouted his lips in disapproval.

At seventy years old, John looked at least a decade younger—his stature was straight, his body was strong, and his hair was grey rather than white. He took the bait, not with his usual enthusiasm, but rather with a quiet, serious demeanor.

"There were about a dozen of us, approachin' this little town that was supposed to be a Vietcong stronghold, where they stored weapons. As we got close, we could see some young 'uns playing. One of the boys saw us and started running to a nearby house. We figured he was gonna warn the men that we was acomin'."

"Those kids were trained to be on the lookout, weren't they?" asked Jim McNally, even though he already knew the answer to his own question.

"Sure as heck they were," said Gran'pa Raskin. "Those kids, it turns out, were probably better trained than we were. Anyway, after the boy entered the house, this young guy, 'bout my age, come to the door with a weapon in his hand. We figured he was 'bout to start shootin'. All of a sudden, we heard shots, but they were comin' from behind us. The whole thing was a trap. They were tryin' to lure us in, so they could surround and shoot us. That's when the captain shouted, Retreat!"



"Must have been scary, just then, huh, John?"

"Scary ain't the word. Most of us had never heard gunfire, 'cept when we was out huntin' deer. Problem was, there was really no place to duck and hide. We were out in the open, so we all dropped to the ground and crawled off sideways. As soon as we reached the edge of the jungle, we tore-ass out of there. Never even fired once. Just ran like lightnin'. All of us did. Fortunately, no one got killed—least not that day!"

Later that day after closing the store, Tommy and his grandfather walked home. "Everythin' okay, Tommy? You seem awful quiet," said Mr. Raskin.

"Yeah, I'm good," replied Tommy but not in his usual, upbeat way. "Gran'pa, is the story you told true? Did you runaway like a coward?"

"I don't think any of us were really cowards," the old man replied. "But, we were all afraid. We were in a strange place, and the enemy sure as heck wanted to kill us. We did the right thing. If we'd stayed, probably none of us would ever have made it home. Besides, we got to fight another day, that way."

Tommy remained quiet for a moment or two, and then he said, "I guess so."

## Story #2: Friends' Dilemma

During the course of their four years of training at West Point, Winthrop and George had become inseparable buddies, the best of friends in the best of ways, despite their very significant differences. Winthrop graduated at the top of his class, with excellent grades, impeccable grooming, and remarkable social skills, befitting the upper-class family that he called "My Folks."

George was almost the mirror image of Winthrop—always late for class, his uniform never quite perfect, and with a real lack of poise. Engaging him in conversation, it was clear that George was from the South, but he seemed to be lacking in all the "charms" that Southern gentlemen were fabled to have. If opposites attract, Winthrop and George were definitely forces from opposing universes. Nonetheless, Winthrop admired George's skills as a fighter and leader of men, and George admired just about everything that made Winthrop the exceptional soldier he was.

The two men sat in a downtown Manhattan pub on a chilly evening in late November of 1860. The word "secession" was on everyone's lips, what with Georgia and other Southern states threatening to sever their ties with the Union.

"It's going to happen, George. You can hear it everywhere. And, it's going to be your home state of Georgia that does it first. You have to decide now what you will do," said Winthrop.

George ran the fingers of his left hand through his thick brown hair. "I don't know, maybe it won't—what a nasty spot that would put me in!" he replied. "I mean how do I fight against my own? My brother sure won't join the Union army. What am I supposed to do, shoot him down for being a traitor to the Union?"

"What am I supposed to do if you go home and fight against the Union? Am I supposed to shoot you? Are you supposed to shoot me? This situation is impossible. And, it's all about slavery, nothing else," said Winthrop. "You know how we feel about that here, don't you?"

"Yes, but you know how we feel about it there. Without slaves, the South will be in ruins. Who will run the plantations if everyone has gone off and joined the army? Who will do all the work in the fields if the slaves are set free? It really is a dilemma. There's no good answer, and both our sides are going to suffer for it," George said with an air of desperation that rattled through his deep, baritone voice.

The conversation went on into the early morning when both men finally said their farewells. Neither had come up with a solution, but each knew where the other's loyalties would eventually lie. That was the last time they saw each other until July 2, 1863 in Kentucky at a place called Gettysburg. Both were lying on the field of battle, bleeding from multiple wounds they had suffered, writhing in pain but without calling out. As the light of day and life passed from their eyes, they both had had the same thought: "I hope it was him who shot me. What better way to die than at the hands of an honorable and noble friend?"

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**19** Which statements support a central idea common to **both** texts? Select **all** that apply.

- ☐ **A** The bonds of family and friendship are too strong to ever really be stressed by outside events.
- ☐ **B** Honorable behavior is the sole basis for maintaining loving family relations and a true friendship.
- ☐ **C** Only a loving relative or a true friend is able to put aside contradictory opinions about important events.
- ☐ **D** The bonds of family and friendship can help one person see events from another person's point of view.
- ☐ **E** Only true friends and loving relatives have shared enough experiences to accept each other's behavior.
- ☐ **F** Good friends and loving relatives will usually be able to resolve their conflicts and come to an agreement.

**20** In "Grandpa's Badge of Courage" and "Friends' Dilemma," what are the most important details each author uses to develop the main characters? Support your answer using details from both texts.

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- 21** How do the authors of “Grandpa’s Badge of Courage” and “Friends’ Dilemma” use text structure and order of events to develop their stories? Support your answer using details from **both** texts.

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**Directions for Part 2**

You will now look at the two stories, take notes, and plan, draft, revise, and edit your literary analysis. You may use your notes and refer to the sources. Now read your assignment and the information about how your literary analysis will be scored; then begin your work.

**Your Assignment**

Write a multi-paragraph literary analysis in which you compare and contrast “Grandpa’s Badge of Courage” and “Friends’ Dilemma” based on their themes, the development of their main characters, and their text structures. In your essay, clearly state your main ideas, supporting each key point with evidence from the texts of the selections.

**Argumentative Scoring**

Your article will be scored using the following:

- 1. Thesis Statement and Organization:** How clearly did you express your thesis, your opinion on the topic? How well did you maintain your focus on the topic? How well did your ideas flow from the introduction to the conclusion? How often did you use effective transitions?
- 2. Elaboration of Evidence:** How well did you support your thesis with evidence from the literary selections? How well did you use relevant evidence from both sources to support your argument?
- 3. Conventions:** How well did you follow the rules of grammar usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling?

**Now begin work on your literary analysis.** Manage your time carefully so that you can plan, write, revise, and edit the final draft of your analysis. Write your response on a separate piece of paper.

