



## Assessment Practice

**DIRECTIONS** Read the following selection and then answer the questions.

### *from* The Hummingbird That Lived Through Winter

*by William Saroyan*

#### COMMON CORE

RL 1 Cite textual evidence to support inferences.  
RL 2 Determine a theme.  
RL 3 Analyze how particular elements of a story interact.  
L 1a Explain the function of clauses in specific sentences.  
L 1b Choose complex sentences to signal differing relationships among ideas. L 4a Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph) as a clue to the meaning of a word. L 5c Distinguish among connotations of words with similar denotations.

- 1 There was a hummingbird once which in the wintertime did not leave our neighborhood in Fresno, California.
- 2 I'll tell you about it.
- 3 Across the street lived old Dikran, who was almost blind. He was past eighty and his wife was only a few years younger. They had a little house that was as neat inside as it was ordinary outside—except for old Dikran's garden, which was the best thing of its kind in the world. Plants, bushes, trees, all strong, in sweet black moist earth whose guardian was old Dikran. All things from the sky loved this spot in our poor neighborhood, and old Dikran loved *them*.
- 4 One freezing Sunday, in the dead of winter, as I came home from Sunday School I saw old Dikran standing in the middle of the street trying to distinguish what was in his hand. Instead of going into our house to the fire, as I had wanted to do, I stood on the steps of the front porch and watched the old man. He would turn around and look upward at his trees and then back to the palm of his hand. He stood in the street at least two minutes and then at last he came to me. He held his hand out, and in Armenian he said, "What is this in my hand?"
- 5 I looked.
- 6 "It is a hummingbird," I said half in English and half in Armenian. Hummingbird I said in English because I didn't know its name in Armenian.
- 7 "What is that?" old Dikran asked.
- 8 "The little bird," I said. "You know. The one that comes in the summer and stands in the air and then shoots away. The one with the wings that beat so fast you can't see them. It's in your hand. It's dying."
- 9 "Come with me," the old man said. "I can't see, and the old lady's at church. I can feel its heart beating. Is it in a bad way? Look again, once."
- 10 I looked again. It was a sad thing to behold. This wonderful little creature of summertime in the big rough hand of the old peasant. Here it

**Practice Test**

**THINK**  
central

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KEYWORD: HML7N-444

was in the cold of winter, absolutely helpless and pathetic, not suspended in a shaft of summer light, not the most alive thing in the world, but the most helpless and heartbreaking.

11 "It's dying," I said.

12 The old man lifted his hand to his mouth and blew warm breath on the little thing in his hand which he could not even see. "Stay now," he said in Armenian. "It is not long till summer. Stay, swift and lovely."

13 We went into the kitchen of his little house, and while he blew warm breath on the bird he told me what to do.

14 "Put a tablespoonful of honey over the gas fire and pour it into my hand, but be sure it is not too hot."

15 This was done.

16 After a moment the hummingbird began to show signs of fresh life. The warmth of the room, the vapor of the warm honey—and, well, the will and love of the old man. Soon the old man could feel the change in his hand, and after a moment or two the hummingbird began to take little dabs of the honey.

17 "It will live," the old man announced. "Stay and watch."

18 The transformation was incredible. The old man kept his hand generously open, and I expected the helpless bird to shoot upward out of his hand, suspend itself in space, and scare the life out of me—which is exactly what happened. The new life of the little bird was magnificent. It spun about in the little kitchen, going to the window, coming back to the heat, suspending, circling as if it were summertime and it had never felt better in its whole life.

19 The old man sat on the plain chair, blind but attentive. He listened carefully and tried to see, but of course he couldn't. He kept asking about the bird, how it seemed to be, whether it showed signs of weakening again, what its spirit was, and whether or not it appeared to be restless; and I kept describing the bird to him.

20 When the bird was restless and wanted to go, the old man said, "Open the window and let it go."

21 "Will it live?" I asked.

22 "It is alive now and wants to go," he said. "Open the window."

23 I opened the window, the hummingbird stirred about here and there, feeling the cold from the outside, suspended itself in the area of the open window, stirring this way and that, and then it was gone.

**GO ON** 

- 24 "Close the window," the old man said.  
25 We talked a minute or two and then I went home.  
26 The old man claimed the hummingbird lived through that winter, but I  
never knew for sure. I saw hummingbirds again when summer came, but  
I couldn't tell one from the other.  
27 One day in the summer I asked the old man.  
28 "Did it live?"  
29 "The little bird?" he said.  
30 "Yes," I said. "That we gave the honey to. You remember. The little bird  
that was dying in the winter. Did it live?"  
31 "Look about you," the old man said. "Do you see the bird?"  
32 "I see hummingbirds," I said.  
33 "Each of them is our bird," the old man said. "Each of them, each of  
them," he said swiftly and gently.

## Reading Comprehension

Use "The Hummingbird That Lived Through Winter" to answer questions 1–9.

1. The setting in a garden affects the theme of the story by —
  - A. emphasizing the certainty of death
  - B. placing the story in Dikran's homeland
  - C. giving the bird a place to escape to
  - D. showing the abundance of nature
2. Seeing Dikran in the street causes the narrator to —
  - A. worry that a car will hit Dikran
  - B. run to his own house to get warm
  - C. watch Dikran to see what he is doing
  - D. look for birds suffering from the cold
3. Which action helps cause the hummingbird to revive?
  - A. Keeping the bird inside all winter
  - B. Asking questions about the bird
  - C. Opening the window
  - D. Feeding the bird warm honey
4. Compare and contrast the hummingbird's behavior. Which statement describes its change in behavior before and after Dikran took it inside?
  - A. *It was a sad thing to behold.*
  - B. *The transformation was incredible.*
  - C. *I can feel its heart beating.*
  - D. *I saw hummingbirds again. . . .*

5. Dikran lets the hummingbird go because he knows that —
- A. it will survive the winter now
  - B. spring will come soon
  - C. a wild creature needs to be free
  - D. he can't take care of it
6. From the way he cares for the hummingbird, what can you infer that Dikran feels about nature?
- A. Nature is harsh and cruel at times.
  - B. Nature does the right thing in the end.
  - C. Some animals cannot survive in nature.
  - D. Weaker animals are treated well by nature.
7. The most important way in which the narrator and Dikran are similar is the fact that they both —
- A. appreciate nature and life
  - B. are from Armenia
  - C. live in the same poor neighborhood
  - D. know a lot about nature
8. Which statement best describes a theme of the story?
- A. The life force is powerful.
  - B. Nature is very fragile.
  - C. Elderly people deserve respect.
  - D. Life is full of hardships.

9. Which lines from the story show how the character of the old man affects the theme?

- A. *Across the street lived old Dikran, who was almost blind.*
- B. *He stood in the street at least two minutes and then at last he came to me.*
- C. *The old man claimed the hummingbird lived through that winter, but I never knew for sure.*
- D. *"Each of them is our bird," the old man said. "Each of them, each of them," he said swiftly and gently.*

#### SHORT CONSTRUCTED RESPONSE

Write two or three sentences to answer this question.

10. Name two things Dikran does to cause the hummingbird to revive. Tell why each action helps the bird.

Write a paragraph to answer this question.

11. What theme does this story share with the poem "Spring Harvest of Snow Peas" on page 394? Compare and contrast how the authors express this theme.

10.

11.

## Vocabulary

Use your knowledge of context clues to answer the following questions.

1. What does the word *distinguish* mean in paragraph 4?

"... I saw old Dikran standing in the middle of the street trying to distinguish what was in his hand."

- A. Caress                      C. Save  
B. Hold                        D. See

2. What does the word *pathetic* mean in paragraph 10?

"Here it was in the cold of winter, absolutely helpless and pathetic, not suspended in a shaft of summer light, not the most alive thing in the world, but the most helpless and heartbreaking."

- A. Broken                      C. Pitiful  
B. Lost                        D. Small

3. What does the word *suspend* mean in paragraph 18?

"... I expected the helpless bird to shoot upward out of his hand, suspend itself in space, and scare the life out of me—which is exactly what happened. The new life of the little bird was magnificent."

- A. Disappear from sight  
B. Stop breathing for a short time  
C. Hang in the air without falling  
D. Spin out of control

Use context clues and your knowledge of connotation and denotation to answer the following questions.

4. In paragraph 3, the author uses the word *ordinary* to show that Dikran's house is —

"They had a little houses that was as neat inside as it was ordinary outside—except for old Dikran's garden, which was the best thing of its kind in the world."

- A. Plain                        C. Scary looking  
B. Poor                        D. Small

5. In paragraph 3, the author uses the word *sweet* to show that the soil in the garden is —

"Plants, bushes, trees—all strong, in sweet black moist earth whose guardian was old Dikran."

- A. Cheap                      C. Perfumed  
B. Good                        D. Tasty

6. In paragraph 10, the author uses the word *peasant* to show that Dikran is —

"This wonderful little creature of summertime in the big rough hand of the old peasant."

- A. Coarse                      C. Friendly  
B. Crazy                        D. Nervous

## Revising and Editing

**DIRECTIONS** Read this passage and answer the questions that follow.

(1) Last summer, our family drove to Mexico. (2) Mexico is my mom's birthplace. (3) We saw the places where she played as a little girl and visited her home. (4) Her old neighborhood has narrow streets. (5) The streets curve past the houses. (6) My mom remembered her friends. (7) She couldn't find any of them. (8) She looked for her old grade school. (9) Like her friends, the school was gone. (10) Still, Mom was happy we went, so we'll probably go back again sometime.

1. What is the BEST way to combine sentences 1 and 2?
  - A. Last summer, our family drove to Mexico and my mom's birthplace is there.
  - B. Last summer, our family drove to Mexico, which is my mom's birthplace.
  - C. Last summer, our family drove to Mexico; Mexico is my mom's birthplace.
  - D. Our family drove to Mexico last summer, and Mexico is my mom's birthplace.
2. What is the BEST way to combine sentences 4 and 5?
  - A. Her old neighborhood has narrow streets, and the streets curve past the houses.
  - B. Her old neighborhood has narrow streets that curve past the houses.
  - C. Her old neighborhood has narrow streets, but the streets curve past the houses.
  - D. Her old neighborhood has narrow streets, and furthermore, these streets curve past the houses.
3. What is the BEST way to combine sentences 6 and 7?
  - A. My mom remembered her friends, she couldn't find any of them.
  - B. My mom remembered her friends, although she couldn't find any of them.
  - C. My mom remembered her friends, or she couldn't find any of them.
  - D. My mom remembered her friends, and she couldn't find any of them.
4. What is the BEST way to combine sentences 8 and 9?
  - A. She looked for her old grade school, and like her friends, the school was gone.
  - B. She looked for her old grade school, like her friends, the school was gone.
  - C. She looked for her old grade school, which like her friends, the school was gone.
  - D. She looked for her old grade school, although like her friends, the school was gone.

