

9th grade Writing Assessment #1 BTW

Nothing Gold Can Stay by Robert Frost

Robert Frost (1874-1963) was one of the most popular and critically respected American poets in history. His poems frequently employ rural scenes from the New England countryside. As you read the poem, take notes on the use of imagery in the poem.

- [1] Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour.
- [5] Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden¹ sank to grief,
So Dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.

Which of the following best identifies a theme of the text?

- Love is unpredictable and inconsistent
 - The most beautiful moments of life are brief
 - Perfection and paradise are unattainable
 - It is dangerous to forget that we will all die at some point
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Part A: What does the color "gold" most likely represent in the poem?

- purity and beauty
 - wealth and riches
 - warmth and kindness
 - strength and power
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Part B: Which phrase from the poem best supports the answer to Part A?

- "Her early leaf's a flower: (lines 3-4)
 - "Then leaf subsides to leaf" (line 5)
 - "So Eden sank to grief" (Line 6)
 - "So Dawn goes down to day" (Line 7)
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Two Ways of Looking At A River by Mark Twain

Samuel Clemens (1835-1910), best known by his pen name Mark Twain, was an American author and humorist. Twain was raised in Missouri and worked for some years as a riverboat pilot on the Mississippi River. The following passage is taken from Life on the Mississippi (1883), a memoir of his days as a steamboat pilot before the American Civil War. As you read, take notes on Twain's use of imagery and how it changes throughout the passage.

Now when I had mastered the language of this water and had come to know every trifling feature that bordered the great river as familiarly as I knew the letters of the alphabet, I had made a valuable acquisition. But I had lost something, too. I had lost something which could never be restored to me while I lived. All the grace, the beauty, the poetry, had gone out the majestic river! I still kept in mind a certain wonderful sunset which I witnessed when steamboating was new to me. A broad expanse of the river was turned to blood; in the middle distance the red hue brightened into gold, through which a solitary log came floating, black and conspicuous; in one place a long, slanting mark lay sparkling upon the water; in another the surface was broken by boiling, tumbling rings that were as many-tinted as an opal; where the ruddy flush was faintest was a smooth spot that was covered with graceful circles and radiating lines, ever so delicately traced; the shore on our left was densely wooded, and the somber shadow that fell from this forest was broken in one place by a long, ruffled trail that shone like silver; and high above the forest wall a clean-stemmed dead tree waved a single leafy bough that glowed like a flame in the unobstructed splendor that was flowing from the sun. There were graceful curves, reflected images woody heights, soft distances, and over the whole scene, far and near, the dissolving lights drifted steadily, enriching it every passing moment with new marvels of coloring.

I stood like one bewitched. I drank it in, in a speechless rapture. The world was new to me and I had never seen anything like this at home. But as I have said, a day came when I began to cease from noting the glories and the charms which the moon and the sun and the twilight wrought upon the river's face; another day came when I ceased altogether to note them. Then, if that sunset scene had been repeated, I should have looked upon it without rapture and should have commented upon it inwardly after this fashion: "This sun means that we are going to have wind tomorrow; that floating log means that the river is rising, small thanks to it; that slanting mark on the water refers to a bluff reef which is going to kill somebody's steamboat one of these nights, if it keeps on stretching out like that; those tumbling 'boils' show a dissolving bar and a changing channel there; the lines and circles in the slick water over yonder are a warning that that troublesome place is shoaling up dangerous; that silver streak in the shadow of the forest is the 'break' from a new snag and he has located himself in the very best place he could have found to fish for steamboats; that tall dead tree, with a single living branch; is not going to last long, and then how is a body ever going to get through this blind place at night without the friendly old landmark?"

No, the romance and beauty were all gone from the river. All the value any feature of it had for me now was the amount of usefulness it could furnish toward compassing the safe piloting of a steamboat. Since those days, I have pitied doctors from my heart. What does the lovely flush in a beauty's cheek mean to a doctor but a "break" that ripples above some deadly disease? Are not all her visible charms sown thick with what are to him the sign and symbols of hidden decay? Does he ever see her beauty at all, or doesn't he simply view her professionally and comment upon her unwholesome condition all to himself? And doesn't he sometimes wonder whether he had gained most or lost most by learning his trade?

Part A: Which of the following best describes how years of piloting a steamboat has affected Twain?

- He has lost his youthful sense of adventure on the Mississippi
- He has lost his appreciation of the Mississippi River's beauty
- He has strengthened his ability to poetically depict the Mississippi
- He has memorized the Mississippi River like the back of his hand

Part B: Cite one example of evidence from the text that supports your answer to Part A.

Part A: As used in paragraph 2, the word "rapture" most nearly means:

- Overwhelmingly awe and emotion
- Curiosity and keen interest
- Indifference or a lack of concern
- Unspeakable horror

Part B: Which of the following phrases from the paragraph BEST supports the answer to Part A?

- "I stood like one bewitched. I drank it in..."
- "never seen anything like this at home"
- "began to cease from notig the glories and the charms"
- "should have commented upon it inwardly"

Write an essay analyzing how both passages address a common theme. Develop your essay by providing textual evidence from both passages.