

“Conscientious Objector” by Edna St. Vincent Millay

“A Man” by Nina Cassian

“The Weary Blues” by Langston Hughes

“Jazz Fantasia” by Carl Sandburg

Selection Test

Critical Reading

In the blank, write the letter of the one best answer.

- ___ 1. The first response of the man who loses an arm in Nina Cassian’s “A Man” is _____.
a. anger
b. sadness
c. determination
d. fear
- ___ 2. Having lost an arm, the man in “A Man” thinks he
a. must give up the piano.
b. will be able to do half as much.
c. will no longer attend shows where he must applaud.
d. can no longer fight for his country.
- ___ 3. The theme of “A Man” is
a. the triumph of determination.
b. the tragedy of war.
c. the sacrifice required by patriotism.
d. the difficulty of physical challenges.
- ___ 4. The ending to “A Man”—“where the arm had been torn away/a wing grew”—means
a. he recovered partially from his wound.
b. he succeeded in spite of his loss.
c. he learned skills with a single hand.
d. his lover accepted him regardless of his injury.
- ___ 5. In “Conscientious Objector,” Edna St. Vincent Millay’s adversary is _____.
a. war
b. slavery
c. fear
d. death
- ___ 6. The tone of “Conscientious Objector” is _____.
a. defiant
b. respectful
c. comic
d. despairing
- ___ 7. In “Conscientious Objector,” why won’t St. Vincent Millay reveal the whereabouts of her enemies?
a. She cannot reliably know who her enemies might be.
b. Her enemies are human and, like her, have a greater enemy.
c. She has taken a vow of silence.
d. She has not been promised enough to make the risk worthwhile.

- ___ 8. Who is the “Brother” referred to at the end of “Conscientious Objector”?
- her adversary
 - her actual brother
 - the boy in the swamp
 - her fellow man
- ___ 9. The setting of “The Weary Blues” is
- a blues festival in New Orleans.
 - a nightclub on Lenox Avenue.
 - a steamboat on the Mississippi.
 - a dark street lit by a gas lamp.
- ___ 10. When the pianist in “The Weary Blues” made the piano “moan with melody,” he
- played poorly though enthusiastically.
 - hummed with the music.
 - played sadly with feeling.
 - banged violently on the keys.
- ___ 11. The “blues” that the pianist sang were about ____.
- poverty
 - labor
 - racism
 - loneliness
- ___ 12. The theme expressed by the tone of “Jazz Fantasia” may be expressed as
- an imitation of music.
 - an appreciation of the art form.
 - the violence of the musicians.
 - the role jazz played in history.
- ___ 13. “Jazz Fantasia” creates its impression by
- using rhythms that sound like music.
 - describing the troubles of the musicians.
 - a series of images suggested by the music.
 - listing various nontraditional instruments.
- ___ 14. Images of love, a car chase, and a fight in “Jazz Fantasia” suggest
- the genuine feelings which jazz expresses.
 - the negative reputation of the music.
 - the failed personal lives of most musicians.
 - specific sounds made by various instruments.
- ___ 15. The tone of the section in “Jazz Fantasia” relating to the steamboat is ____.
- ironic
 - gentle
 - historic
 - angry

Vocabulary and Grammar

- ___ 16. The word *reap* means
- fold
 - attack
 - gather
 - deserve

- ___ 17. In which sentence is the usual subject-verb order reversed?
- I hear him leading his horse out of the stall.
 - I will not tell him which way the fox ran.
 - The plans of our city are safe with me.
 - Never through me shall you be overcome.
- ___ 18. The word *pallor* means ____.
- flabbiness
 - paleness
 - meeting
 - boredom
- ___ 19. The word *melancholy* means ____.
- depressed
 - angry
 - ill
 - perplexed
- ___ 20. In sentences beginning with *here* or *there*
- the verb always follows the subject
 - the verb is always a linking verb
 - the subject usually follows the verb
 - subject-verb order is never reversed

Essay Questions

21. A man loses his arm in Nina Cassian's poem, "A Man," and after considering his loss, tries to "do everything with twice as much enthusiasm." In some ways, understanding this resolve is easy to explain. He makes up for losing half his physical ability by doubling his effort. For those of us who are not physically challenged, however, there are other challenges which we must overcome with a change in attitude. How can a positive spirit like that of the man in Nina Cassian's poem help us to face such tasks? Write an essay in which you explain the role of attitude in overcoming obstacles. Give several specific examples from life, and show how one's state of mind is important in achieving goals.
22. A conscientious objector is one who, for reasons of ethical or religious belief, refuses to take part in warfare. Why would Edna St. Vincent Millay refer to herself as a conscientious objector in her poem about death? Is this title appropriate for the tone and images in the poem? Write an essay in which you discuss the title of "Conscientious Objector," and explain what Edna St. Vincent Millay objects to and how the poem shows her to be a conscientious objector. Use examples from the poem to illustrate your ideas.
23. Both Langston Hughes, in "The Weary Blues," and Carl Sandburg, in "Jazz Fantasia," write about unique forms of music. Each poet attempts to capture the essence of jazz and blues for the reader, yet each does so differently. Write an essay in which you consider the differing approaches of these two poets as they attempt a similar goal. Discuss setting, action, images, ideas, and tone as you assess the poets' perspectives on these distinct American art forms. Give specific examples from the poems to support your ideas.