

“Mowing” and “After Apple-Picking” by Robert Frost
“Style” and “At Harvesttime” by Maya Angelou

Selection Test

Critical Reading

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

- ____ 1. What is the main focus of Robert Frost’s poem “Mowing”?
- admiring snakes and other wild creatures
 - growing vegetables
 - cutting grass with a scythe
 - cutting grass with a gas-powered lawn mower
- ____ 2. What is the tone of the following passage from “Mowing”?
- It was no dream of the gift of idle hours,/Or easy gold at the hand of fay or elf:
Anything more than the truth would have seemed/too weak/To the earnest love
that laid the swale in rows, . . .
- frightened
 - excited
 - annoyed
 - respectful
- ____ 3. In “Mowing,” what do the descriptions of the speaker’s work reveal about the speaker?
- He values quiet, steady, outdoor work.
 - He finds outdoor work draining and unsatisfying.
 - He is looking forward to winter.
 - He dislikes weeds and snakes.
- ____ 4. Interpret the image of the lone, whispering scythe in “Mowing.” What mood does this image create?
- desperation
 - suspense
 - sadness
 - tranquillity
- ____ 5. In “After Apple-Picking,” what images fill the speaker’s mind as he tries to sleep?
- images of a vacation
 - images of next year’s crop of apples
 - images of apples and the task he just completed
 - images of profits from his apples
- ____ 6. In “After Apple-Picking,” how might you describe the speaker’s condition as he tries to sleep?
- energized
 - exhausted but unable to relax his mind
 - angry that he failed at his task
 - annoyed with his life
- ____ 7. Interpret the image in “After Apple-Picking” of the woodchuck’s long sleep. Why might the speaker compare himself to a woodchuck?
- Woodchucks eat apples.
 - Woodchucks live in apple orchards.
 - Woodchucks keep busy all summer and then hibernate for a long winter’s rest.
 - Woodchucks once destroyed his apple crop, and he hopes that they will hibernate soon.

- ___ 8. According to “After Apple-Picking,” how do extreme hard work and ambition sometimes affect people?
- People become exhausted and are unable to stop thinking about the job they’ve just completed.
 - People become wealthy and filled with greed.
 - People decide to change completely the course of their lives.
 - People look forward to winter.
- ___ 9. What is the tone of the following line from Maya Angelou’s “Style”?
- Content is of great importance, but we must not underrate the value of style.
- humorous
 - angry
 - timid and unsure
 - firm and confident
- ___ 10. Interpret the main idea of Angelou’s piece “At Harvesttime.” What message is she trying to convey to readers?
- Have confidence and develop a unique sense of style.
 - Borrow ideas and mannerisms from other people.
 - Walk away from difficult situations.
 - Disarm rude people by uttering insults at them.
- ___ 11. According to Angelou in “At Harvesttime,” the “highest manifestations,” or best displays, of style are
- cleverness and charm.
 - good manners and tolerance.
 - expensive clothing and jewelry.
 - parties and other social events.
- ___ 12. What is the tone of the following passage from “At Harvesttime”?
- Now, after years of observation and enough courage to admit what I have observed, I try to plant peace if I want to avoid betrayal and lies. Of course, there is no absolute assurance that those things I plant will always fall upon arable land . . .
- rude and arrogant
 - sad
 - serious and thoughtful
 - light and humorous
- ___ 13. How might you interpret the following passage from “At Harvesttime”?
- Of course, there is no absolute assurance that those things I plant will always fall upon arable land and will take root and grow, nor can I know if another cultivator did not leave contrary seeds before I arrived.
- Farming is difficult, time-consuming work that is not ideal for everyone.
 - You should not trust other people, especially people with whom you are competing.
 - Be careful where you plant seeds, because some soil is not arable.
 - Even if you are thoughtful and careful, you cannot control everything in life.
- ___ 14. Frost’s poems “Mowing” and “After Apple-Picking,” as well as Maya Angelou’s poem “At Harvesttime,” convey ideas by using images of ____.
- apple orchards
 - wildlife
 - seeds
 - farming

Vocabulary and Grammar

- ___ 15. In the following sentence, what question does the underlined adverb answer?
Never try to take the manners of another as your own, for the theft will be immediately evident.
- Where?
 - When?
 - In what way?
 - To what extent?
- ___ 16. The speaker of “After Apple-Picking” thinks about apples hanging from the ___ of a tree.
- cider-heap
 - ladder
 - trough
 - bough
- ___ 17. Which sentence contains an adverb that modifies another adverb?
- The pickers worked quickly to fill the large brown barrel.
 - Feeling the heat of the sun on their backs, the men worked very rapidly.
 - The apple-picker soon drifted into a deeply satisfying sleep.
 - There were ten thousand fruit to cherish in hand, lift down, and not let fall.
- ___ 18. According to the speaker in “Style,” a person with style can respond calmly and confidently to an unfriendly ___.
- manifestation
 - admonition
 - content
 - gibe
- ___ 19. How might you interpret the following line from Angelou’s poem “At Harvesttime”?
... there are those who seem certain that if they plant tomato seeds, at harvest-time they can reap onions.
- Some people do not know a great deal about farming.
 - Some people do not realize that they are responsible for their own actions and that they will often get what they deserve.
 - Some people quarrel too much and fail to find comfort in farming.
 - Some people have unrealistic expectations for their lives.
- ___ 20. The speaker in “At Harvesttime” lives according to a firm, ___ life principle.
- disparaging
 - immutable
 - knowledgeable
 - quiet

Essay Questions

21. In a short essay, describe some of the advice Maya Angelou gives about dealing with other people in her poems “Style” and “At Harvesttime.” What does Angelou mean when she says “Style allows the person to appear neither inferior in one location nor superior in the other. Good manners and tolerance can often transform disaster into good fortune”? In what way is this line similar to the following line from “At Harvesttime”: “I try to plant peace if I want to avoid betrayal and lies”?
22. Write an essay in which you describe the two perspectives on work that are given in Robert Frost’s poems “Mowing” and “After Apple-Picking.” In your essay, answer the following questions: How does the speaker in “Mowing” feel about his work? How does the speaker in “After Apple-Picking” feel at the end of his day? What do the two speakers have in common? In what way do they differ?
23. In an essay, describe some of the images that Frost and Angelou use in their poems to depict the wonders of the natural world and the details and difficulties of the farmer’s work. What do these images reveal about the different moods and the main ideas of the pieces?