

“Success is counted sweetest” and “I dwell in Possibility—” by Emily Dickinson
“Uncoiling” by Pat Mora
“Columbus Dying” by Vassar Miller

Selection Test

Critical Reading

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

- _____ 1. According to the speaker of “Success is counted sweetest,” who most values success?
a. soldiers
b. unsuccessful people
c. poets
d. skilled fighters
- _____ 2. What hardship afflicts Columbus’s men in “Columbus Dying”?
a. They must wear chains.
b. They are lost at sea.
c. They are starving and feverish.
d. They have vertigo.
- _____ 3. The speaker of “I dwell in Possibility—” describes the chambers “as the Cedars.” Clues from the rest of the poem can help you infer that cedars are _____.
a. massive
b. unimpressive
c. average
d. as wide as the speaker’s hands
- _____ 4. An example of stated theme in poetry is
a. “Success is counted sweetest.”
b. “I dwell in Possibility.”
c. “Columbus Dying.”
d. “Uncoiling.”
- _____ 5. In “I dwell in Possibility—,” the lines “More numerous of Windows—/Superior—for Doors—” suggest that
a. the house of prose is cramped and uninviting.
b. imagination is better than real life.
c. possibility includes entertaining a variety of views and opinions.
d. the speaker despises people who lack imagination.
- _____ 6. The “pale women” in “Uncoiling” react to the wind by
a. running away in terror.
b. hurriedly locking windows and doors.
c. throwing back their heads and sighing.
d. spinning themselves to sleep.
- _____ 7. In “Columbus Dying,” why does it make no difference to Columbus “whether they tumble off earth’s edge or crawl/Till dropped dead in their tracks from vertigo”?
a. No one believes his theory that the world is not flat.
b. He is too modest to accept praise for his successes.
c. He has become hopeless as he realizes death is near.
d. In the face of death, his achievement seems insignificant.

- ___ 8. What does “Prose” represent in “I dwell in Possibility—”?
- imagination
 - nonfiction
 - ordinary life
 - confined quarters
- ___ 9. For the dying man in “Success is counted sweetest,” why do the “distant strains of triumph/Burst agonized and clear”?
- His senses are heightened in his final moments.
 - He is most attuned to victory, the one thing he has longed for above all else.
 - In death, he realizes his own personal triumph.
 - He feels defeated and alone.
- ___ 10. In “Columbus Dying,” what can you infer from the lines, “No dragons gnawing on drowned sailors’ brains,/He missed the angels guarding the four corners”?
- People in Columbus’s time believed many myths about sea travel.
 - Columbus was a superstitious person.
 - Many sailors died on the transatlantic crossing.
 - Columbus and his crew had an easy voyage.
- ___ 11. From what evidence would you infer that the speaker of “Uncoiling” admires the power of the wind?
- “she scratches/on my window”
 - “She spews gusts and thunder,/spooks pale women who scurry”
 - “her tumbleweed skirt/starts its spin”
 - “spins herself/to sleep”
- ___ 12. The speaker’s preference for possibility over prose implies that the theme of “I dwell in Possibility—” is
- everyday life is unbearable without imagination.
 - poetry expresses deeper emotions than prose.
 - imagination makes life richer.
 - some people never realize their full potential.
- ___ 13. What information can you infer from the images of thorns, lightning, cholla, hawks, tumbleweeds, and sand in “Uncoiling”?
- The wind is a powerful and awesome force.
 - The poem is set in the southwestern United States.
 - The pale women are easily frightened by nature.
 - The speaker admires the wind’s reckless energy.

Vocabulary and Grammar

- ___ 14. In “Columbus Dying,” Columbus is *thrall* to “his vision of men creeping to and fro” because
- he can never escape his connection to his empty achievement.
 - he feels free when it is time for him to die.
 - he commands great power and respect.
 - he is merely a servant to the king and queen.
- ___ 15. Neither Columbus nor his ___ ___ illness.
- men; escapes
 - sailors; escapes
 - sailor; escapes
 - men; escape

- ___ 16. Both lightning ___ hawks ___ in her dark hair.
a. and; swarms
b. and; swarm
c. or; swarm
d. nor; swarms
- ___ 17. An *impregnable* building would
a. catch fire.
b. withstand attack.
c. inspire imagination.
d. make one feel dizzy.
- ___ 18. A person suffering from *vertigo* might
a. sleep heavily.
b. feel hopeless.
c. have scabs.
d. fall down.
- ___ 19. The antonym for *mature* is _____.
a. immature
b. unmature
c. immature
d. imature
- ___ 20. The women ___ while the wind _____.
a. sings; roars
b. sing; roar
c. sing; roars
d. sings; roars

Essay Questions

21. Although written by the same poet, “Success is counted sweetest” and “I dwell in Possibility—” have different themes. Which theme appeals to you more? Why? In an essay, give details from the poem to support your opinion.
22. Life is rarely all good or all bad but is instead a challenging mixture of the positive and negative. In an essay respond to this statement and support your opinion with details from the poems.
23. The speaker of “Uncoiling” uses women to represent different values. How does the speaker reinforce traditional or stereotypical female roles? How does the speaker create liberating images of women? In an essay, compare and contrast the different images that the poem presents.