



English I Reading

Connecting Selections Scoring Guide April 2013

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Read the next two selections and answer the questions that follow.

Sunday Morning Early

by David Romtvedt

My daughter and I paddle identical red kayaks
across the lake. Pulling hard, we slip easily
through the water. Far from either shore
it hits me that my daughter is a young woman,
5 and suddenly everything is a metaphor for how
short a time we are granted on earth:
the red boats on the blue-black water,
the russet and gold of late summer's sunburnt grasses,
the empty blue sky. We stop and listen to the stillness.
10 I say, "It's Sunday, and here we are
in the church of the out-of-doors."
Then I wish I'd had the sense to stay quiet.
That's the trick in life—learning to leave well enough alone.

Our boats drift north to where the chirring
15 of grasshoppers reaches us from the rocky hills.
A clap of thunder beyond those hills. How well sound
travels over water. I want to say just the right thing,
something stronger and truer than a lame *I love you*.
I want my daughter to know that, through her, I live
20 a life that was closed to me before. I paddle up
beside her, lean out from the boat, and touch
her hand. I start to speak, then stop.

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I Wish I Was a Poet

from *Like One of the Family*

by Alice Childress

- 1 Marge, I wish I was a poet. . . . Now that's no cause for you to stop stringing the beans and lookin' at me like you was struck by lightnin'. . . . No, I don't wish it on account of I want to be famous, but I do wish it because sometimes there are poetry things that I see and I'd like to tell people about them in a poetry way; only I don't know how, and when I tell it, it's just a plain flat story.
- 2 Well, for an instance, you know my cousin Thelma stopped in town for a few days, and she stayed at a downtown hotel. . . . Yes, I dropped by to see her last night. . . . Now, Marge, when I walked up to the desk to get her room number, all of a sudden the folks in the lobby cleared a path on both sides of me and I was about to get real salty about their attitude when I chanced to look behind me and saw two old people walkin' up to the desk. . . .
- 3 No, they were white, and you've never seen such a couple in your life—a man and his wife, and they must have been in their seventies. They were raggedy and kinda beat. The old lady wore men's shoes and trousers and an old battered raincoat and on her head a man's hat. From under the hat her white hair hung in curly wisps—and she was pretty. . . .



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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY—Alice Childress (1916–1994)

Alice Childress, the African American author of the short story "I Wish I Was a Poet," was born in South Carolina but moved to Harlem when she was nine to live with her grandmother. She credits her grandmother, who had no formal education, with exposing her to a world of culture as well as instilling in her a love of storytelling and a sensitivity to class issues.

Dedicated to the art of storytelling, Childress explored a variety of methods in order to share ideas throughout her lifetime, including serving as a playwright, novelist, actor, director, and teacher.

- 4 Yes, mam, she was pretty and still she was seventy and bent and dragged her feet along instead of liftin' them. The man was dressed just as sorry as her and in his hand he carried a paper bag. . . . Marge, he was lookin' at her like every woman on earth dreams of bein' looked at, and her eyes were doin' the same thing back at him.
- 5 Honey, everyone was standin', just starin'. There was a giggle from some kid and one well-dressed woman looked like she was goin' to faint, but the old man walked up to the clerk with the old lady follerin' behind him and he said in a quavery voice, "We'd like a room for the night."
- 6 Well, you could cut the silence with a knife. The clerk hemmed and hawed while they stood there lookin' back at him real innocent and peaceful, and finally he said, "You'll have to pay in advance." "How much is the cheapest room?" the old man asked. The clerk breathed a little easier and said: "Three-fifty." The old man went in his coat pocket and brought out four crumpled up dollar bills and put them on the desk.
- 7 The clerk turned red in the face and said real loud, "You can't have a room without carryin' baggage—where's your baggage?" You could hear a pin drop when the old man placed the paper bag on the desk, opened it and pulled out two rough dry shirts. . . . Well, with that the clerk took the money, gave him a key and fifty cents change and said, "Top floor rear!"
- 8 The couple smiled in such a dignified way, and it seemed like they hadn't noticed a thing. They started over toward the elevator and then the old lady turned away from the man and made her way over to the receptionist's desk. Everyone kept their eyes dead on her, and the receptionist, who was awfully young and pretty, was almost scared out of her wits. The old lady kept makin' straight for her, and I could see that the young lady was gonna scream any second. . . .
- 9 When the old woman reached the desk, she leaned over a bowl of red roses that was there and, ever so gently, breathed in the sweet smell, and then she turned away and quickly joined her husband at the elevator, and nobody moved until the doors closed and they were gone from sight. . . .
- 10 That's all, Marge. Of course, there was buzzin' and hummin' after that, but I got to wonderin' about who they were and where they came from . . . and did they have children . . . and how much work they both done in their lifetime . . . and what it must feel like to be old and draggin' around in the cold.
- 11 That's all there is to the story and it sure don't sound like much the way I tell it, but if I was a poet, I would sing a song of praise for the love in their eyes and I would make you see the sight of a lifetime when that ragged lady bent over those roses, and I would tell how awful it is to be old and broke in the midst of plenty. . . . And that's what I mean when I say—sometimes I wish I was a poet.

English I Reading Connecting Selections

What message do you think the speaker in "Sunday Morning Early" and the narrator of "I Wish I Was a Poet" are trying to convey? Explain your answer and support it with evidence from **both** selections.

Score Point 0—Insufficient Response to the Question

Insufficient responses indicate a very limited reading performance.

These responses have one of the following problems.

- ❑ For one or both selections, the idea is not an answer to the question asked.
- ❑ The idea is incorrect because it is not based on one or both selections.
- ❑ For one or both selections, the idea is too general, vague, or unclear to determine whether it is reasonable.
- ❑ No idea is present from either selection. Sometimes the response contains only text evidence from one or both selections. At other times there appears to be an idea; however, this idea cannot be considered an answer to the question because it merely repeats verbatim, or “echoes,” the text evidence.

They both are writing poetry, and they also write poetry about somebody. In "Sunday Morning Early" is about a girl who is the daughter of the narrator and in "I wish I was a poet" is about a loving old couple.

Score Point 0

The student does not answer the question asked because he does not present a message conveyed in either selection. Instead, the student presents an incorrect idea followed by a statement of what each selection is generally about.

They are trying to convey that don't judge people how they look like the two couple on "I wish I was a poet" The women was dressed all ~~saggy~~ raggedy beat up cloth. The men was dressed just as sorry as her. "Marge; he was lookin' at her like every women on earth dreams of bein' looked at, and her eyes were doin' the same thing back at him".

Score Point 0

The student presents a reasonable idea for "I Wish I Was a Poet" and supports the idea with relevant textual evidence. However, the response contains neither an idea nor textual evidence for "Sunday Morning Early." Because both selections are not addressed, this response indicates a very limited reading performance.

The message both selections are trying to give out is how the narrator says it hits me that my daughter is a young woman... I want my daughter to know that, through her, I live a life that was closed to me before... I start to speak, then stop." In "I Wish I Was a Poet" the narrator says "... if I was a poet, I would sing a song of praise for the love in their eyes and I would make you see the sight of a lifetime when that ragged lady bent over those racks, and I would tell how awful it is to be old and broke in the midst of plenty.. And that's what I mean I wish I was a poet."

Score Point 0

The student provides textual evidence from both selections but does not offer an idea for either. Stating that both the speaker and the narrator are trying to convey a message only repeats the question; it does not constitute an idea. Because no idea is presented, this response is insufficient.

The message that the speaker in "Sunday Morning Early" and "I Wish I Was a Poet" are trying to convey is that they both had a dream or they wished that they could do something that they really wanted to do.

Score Point 0

The student presents an idea that is too vague to determine whether it is reasonable.

Score Point 1—Partially Sufficient Response to the Question

Partially sufficient responses indicate a basic reading performance.

These responses have one of the following characteristics.

- ❑ The idea is reasonable for both selections, but the response contains no text evidence (from one or both selections).
- ❑ The idea is reasonable for both selections, but the text evidence (from one or both selections) is flawed and does not adequately support the idea. Text evidence is considered inadequate when it is
 - only a general reference to the text,
 - too partial to support the idea,
 - weakly linked to the idea, or
 - used inappropriately because it wrongly manipulates the meaning of the text.
- ❑ For one or both selections, the idea needs more explanation or specificity even though it is supported with text evidence from both selections.
- ❑ For one or both selections, the idea represents only a literal reading of the text, with or without text evidence (from one or both selections).
- ❑ The response contains relevant textual evidence from both selections, but the student offers an idea that is reasonable for only one selection.
- ❑ The response contains an idea and relevant text evidence for both selections, but the idea for one selection contains an inaccuracy.

In both stories "Sunday Morning Early" and "I Wish I Was a Poet" the narrator trying to tell or say something.

"I paddle up beside her, lean out from my boat, and touch her hand, I started to speak, then stop."

"That's all there is to the story and it sure don't sound like much the way I tell it."

Score Point 1

The student offers the idea that the speaker and the narrator are trying to tell or say something and supports it with textual evidence. However, the idea needs more explanation to be considered reasonable. Therefore, this response represents a basic reading performance.

The speakers of "Sunday Morning Early" and "I Wish I Was a Poet" are using stories of love to show that human emotion can be so strong that words just aren't good enough to describe it. Both are speaking of times that they would have expressed the love they saw and felt but simply could not find words strong enough. Both believe that there is something more powerful than what can be said aloud and hope to convey the message that sometimes, it's best not to speak. They both realize that the wordless conversations between the man and his daughter and the poor old couple meant more than words can ever say. They believe that if you let your actions and art speak for you, they will say all you ever wanted to and more.

Score Point 1

The student presents the reasonable idea that the speaker and the narrator convey the message that human emotions can be so strong that words cannot describe them. Although the analysis is clear and reasonable, the student provides no textual support, making this response only partially sufficient.

Romvedt states, "I paddle up beside her lean out from the boat, and touch her hand. I start to speak, then stop" (lines 21-22). Love is so strong, he doesn't even know what to say to his daughter. Childress states, "Marge, he was lookin' at her like every woman on earth dreams of being looked at, and her eyes were doin' the same thing back at him" (Paragraph, 4).

Score Point 1

The student offers an idea that addresses only "Sunday Morning Early." The idea is reasonable and is supported with textual evidence from that selection. The student provides relevant textual evidence from "I Wish I Was a Poet" but no corresponding idea. Responses that contain relevant textual evidence from both selections but a reasonable idea for only one selection indicate that the student's reading performance is basic.

The message I think the speaker in "Sunday Morning Early" and the narrator of "I Wish I Was a Poet" are trying to convey, is that true love exists, and you can't just say it, you have to demonstrate it, at least with a sign. In "Sunday Morning Early" says, "I want to say just the right thing, something stronger and truer than a love I love you." In "I Wish I was a Poet" says, "You've never seen such a couple in your life- a man and his wife, and they must been in their seventies." Therefore, the message I think they are trying to convey, is that no matter what the situation is, true love will help to solve everything.

Score Point 1

The student offers the reasonable idea that both the speaker and the narrator are trying to convey the message that true love must be demonstrated rather than spoken. Relevant textual evidence from "Sunday Morning Early" fully supports the idea because the quotation provided indicates that the speaker doesn't want to use the same "lame" words to show his love for his daughter. However, the textual evidence provided to support the idea for "I Wish I Was a Poet" is flawed because it is only weakly linked to the idea. The quotation provided merely describes the old couple and does not address how love is communicated. Because the idea is not supported with relevant text from both selections, the response is partially sufficient.

Score Point 2—Sufficient Response to the Question

Sufficient responses indicate a satisfactory reading performance.

These responses have the following characteristics.

- ❑ For both selections, the idea is reasonable and goes beyond a literal reading of the text. It is explained specifically enough to show that the student can make appropriate connections across the selections and draw valid conclusions.
- ❑ For both selections, the text evidence that is used to support the idea is accurate and relevant.
- ❑ For both selections, the idea and text evidence used to support it are clearly linked.
- ❑ For both selections, the combination of the idea and the text evidence demonstrates a good understanding of the text.

In "Sunday Morning," the narrator is trying to convey that life goes by fast. Proof of this is "Far from either shore it hits me that my daughter is a young woman, and suddenly everything is a metaphor for how short time we are granted on earth." What this is saying, is that time flies by so make the best of it. In "I Wish I Was A Poet," The narrator is trying to convey that even though you are poor you can still have love. Proof of this "Marge, he was lookin' at her like every woman on earth dreams of bein' looked at, and her eyes were doin' the same thing back at him."

Score Point 2

The student offers a reasonable idea for each selection: for "Sunday Morning Early," the message is that life goes by fast, and for "I Wish I Was a Poet," the message is that even poor people can be in love. Relevant textual evidence is provided from both selections, making this a sufficient response.

In the stories "Sunday Morning Early" and "I Wish I Was a Poet" it mentioned first on "Sunday Morning Early," "I want to say just the right thing, something stronger and truer than a lame I love you. I want my daughter that, through her, I live a life that was closed to me before." and on "I Wish I Was a Poet" it said, "... because sometimes there are poetry things I see and I'd like to tell people about them in a poetry way; only I don't know how, and when I tell it, it's just a plain flat story. This means like they would love to have the right words to say when they need them instead of saying something blank and dull."

Score Point 2

The student offers the idea that both the speaker and the narrator wish they had the right words to express how they felt in each circumstance. The idea is specific and reasonable and demonstrates the student's ability to make appropriate connections across the selections. The student also supports this idea with a direct quotation from each selection. This response represents a satisfactory reading performance.

The message is clearly stated that some things are better left unsaid. In "Sunday Morning Early" it is shown when the author states, "Then I wish I'd have the sense to stay quiet." He also says, "That's the trick to life—learning to leave well alone." In "I Wish I Was a Poet" the blind old couple hardly speak. However, their body language shows that, "... he was lookin' at her like every girl on earth dreams of bein' looked at, and her eyes were doing the same thing right back." This allowed the reader to see how deep they were in love without stating it.

Score Point 2

In this sufficient response, the student offers the idea that some things are better left unsaid. This idea is reasonable for both selections and clearly linked to the direct quotations that are used to support it.

The message that "Sunday Morning Early" and "I Wish I Was a Poet" are trying to say is love the little things in life. For example, in "Sunday Morning Early" it is the view. The author is kayaking with his daughter and describes the view at the lake as "the church out-of-doors" (Romtvedt 21). In the "I Wish I Was a Poet" story the 70 year old woman goes over to "breathe in the sweet smell" of a rose. She enjoys the little things of life, and so does the narrator of "Sunday Early Morning."

Score Point 2

The student offers the reasonable idea that both the speaker and the narrator convey the message that people should love the little things in life. The idea shows that the student can make appropriate connections across the selections. Relevant textual evidence from each selection sufficiently supports the idea. This response demonstrates a good understanding of the texts.

Score Point 3—Exemplary Response to the Question

Exemplary responses indicate an accomplished reading performance.

These responses have the following characteristics.

- For both selections, the idea is perceptive and reflects an awareness of the complexities of the text. The student is able to develop a coherent explanation of the idea by making discerning connections across both selections.
- For both selections, the text evidence that is used to support the idea is specific and well chosen. Overall, the evidence strongly supports the validity of the idea.
- For both selections, the combination of the idea and the text evidence demonstrates a deep understanding of the text.

I think the message both the speaker from "Sunday Morning" and the narrator from "I Wish I Was a Poet" are trying to convey how passionate they felt at the moment of the situation they were in, the only problem was they couldn't find the right words to say it. Like in "Sunday Morning" stanza 2 lines 17-20, "I want to say just the right thing something stronger and truer than a lame I love you. I want my daughter to know that, through her, I live a life that was closed to me before." Also in "I Wish I Was a Poet" paragraph 11, "...don't sound like much the way I would tell it, but if I was a poet, I would sing a song of praise for the love in their eyes and would make you see the sight of a lifetime when that ragged lady bent over those roses, and I would tell how awful it is to be old and broke in the midst of plenty."

Score Point 3

In this exemplary response, the student offers the perceptive idea that sometimes it is difficult to find the right words when you feel passionate about something. Specific, well-chosen textual evidence is provided to strongly support the validity of the idea, reflecting the student's deep understanding of the selections.

In "Sunday Morning" and "I Wish I Was a Poet," the message is that sometimes things are hard to say. Emotions are so huge and overwhelming that saying them in normal words just doesn't seem like it's enough. The narrator in "I Wish I Was a Poet" says, "I'd like to tell people about them in a poetry way; only I don't know how, and when I tell it, it's just a plain flat story." Showing that it's hard to describe emotions and feelings with just words. Also, in "Sunday Morning," the narrator says "I want to say just the right thing, something stronger and truer than a lame I love you." Here, the narrator, stating that, shows he himself can not describe his feelings with words either, just as the narrator in the other passage.

Score Point 3

The student presents the reasonable idea that both the speaker and the narrator convey the message that sometimes things can be hard to say. Additional analysis extends the idea and demonstrates the student's ability to make discerning connections across the selections. Well-chosen textual evidence strongly supports the validity of the idea.

The speakers of both excerpts are trying to convey that many things, love, especially, are best said by not being said. Sometimes the emotion can be expressed better by showing someone, not telling them.

As the father loves his daughter very much and cherishes her company, he wants her to know how much she means to him, that "through her, I live a life that was closed to me before." He needs to let her know, but with "something stronger and truer than a love / love you." At the end of the passage, he realizes that it's best "learning to leave well enough alone," and that by touching his daughter's hand, she understood his love for her. This is the same as how the elder couple "seemed like they didn't notice a thing" going on around them because they were so focused on each other. "He was lookin' at her like every woman on earth dreams of bein' looked at, and her eyes were doin' the same thing back at him." Without saying it, the connection between the two expressed their love by actions, not words.

Score Point 3

The student demonstrates an accomplished reading performance by developing a coherent explanation of how both the speaker and the narrator convey the message that love can be expressed better by actions than by words. The combination of this idea and well-chosen text evidence from each selection demonstrates a deep understanding of the selections.

In these two selections the narrators, at both two different worlds, crave the same objective; to be able to communicate what they feel in a way they don't know how to. "That's all there is to the story and it sure don't sound like much the way I tell it, but if I was a poet, I would sing a song of praise for the love in their eyes and I would make you see the right of a lifetime when that aged lady bent over those roses..." The narrator in this section is dramatic and longing to be able to tell this love story in a beautiful poetic form, but she feels as if she can't word the words right in her poetry to send the message she yearns to tell. "That's the trick in life - learning to leave well enough alone... I want to say the right thing, something stronger than a love I love you." The narrator thinks these words to poetry that he wants to tell his daughter that he loves her but in a more thought-out sophisticated way. He wants to say everything to her, but that words do it. They both just don't know how word their message the way they see it.

Score Point 3

The student presents the reasonable idea that both the speaker and the narrator convey the message that they are unable to communicate the way they want. Further explanation of the idea is perceptive and reflects an awareness of the complexities of the texts. Well-chosen text evidence strongly supports the validity of the idea. This response represents an accomplished reading performance.