

Snow Packet 6-10  
English 7

Instructions:

- Put your full header at the top of this page
- Complete all text-based questions (multiple-choice AND short answer)
- Packet is due no more than two days after your return to school

# Snow Packet Day 6

## Fifth Grade Autobiography

By Rita Dove

1989

*Rita Dove is a contemporary American writer. She is the second African American poet to receive the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry. As you read, identify what details the speaker focuses on from their past.*

- [1] I was four in this photograph fishing  
with my grandparents at a lake in Michigan.  
My brother squats in poison ivy.  
His Davy Crockett<sup>1</sup> cap  
[5] sits squared on his head so the raccoon tail  
flounces down the back of his sailor suit.

My grandfather sits to the far right  
in a folding chair,  
and I know his left hand is on

- [10] the tobacco in his pants pocket because  
I used to wrap it for him every  
Christmas. Grandmother's hips bulge  
from the brush, she's leaning into the ice  
chest, sun through the trees  
[15] printing her dress with soft  
luminous<sup>2</sup> paws.

I am staring jealously at my brother;  
the day before he rode his first horse, alone.  
I was strapped in a basket

- [20] behind my grandfather.  
He smelled of lemons. He's died—

but I remember his hands.



*"Untitled" by Carl Zitsman is licensed under CC0.*

*"Fifth Grade Autobiography" from Grace Notes, © 1989, Rita Dove. Reprinted with permission, all rights reserved.*

1. Davy Crockett was an American folk hero of the 1800s known for living in the western American "frontier lands" of Tennessee and Texas. He is often associated with a raccoon hat he wore.
2. **Luminous (adjective):** full of or shedding light; bright or shining

## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which of the following statements best describes the speaker's point of view [RL.6] towards the grandfather?
  - A. The speaker cannot understand the grandfather's death because the speaker is only four.
  - B. The speaker wonders what life will be like without the beloved grandfather.
  - C. As the speaker remembers their childhood, they realize they are relieved by their grandfather's death.
  - D. As the speaker remembers childhood, they are emotionally reserved about their grandfather's death.
  
2. PART B: Which detail from the poem best supports your answer to Part A? [RL.1]
  - A. "I was four in this photograph" (Line 1)
  - B. "My grandfather sits to the far right / in a folding chair" (Lines 7-8)
  - C. "I know his left hand is on / the tobacco in his pants pocket" (Lines 9-10)
  - D. "He's died— / but I remember his hands." (Lines 21-22)
  
3. PART A: Which of the following best describes the tone of this poem? [RL.4]
  - A. overemotional — because they miss their grandfather
  - B. jealous — because their brother gets to be more independent
  - C. hopeful — because their family is together and happy
  - D. reflective — because they are looking back on their childhood
  
4. PART B: Which phrase from the text best supports the answer to Part A? [RL.1]
  - A. "My brother squats in poison ivy." (Line 3)
  - B. "I used to wrap it for him / every Christmas." (Lines 11-12)
  - C. "sun through the trees / printing her dress with soft / luminous paws." (Lines 14-16)
  - D. "the day before he rode his first horse, alone." (Line 18)
  
5. How does the imagery used to describe the setting contribute to the speaker's attitude towards the memory described in the poem? [RL.3]

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Snow Packet Day 7

## Answer to A Child's Question

By Samuel Taylor Coleridge

1802

*Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) was an English poet, literary critic, and a founder of the Romantic Movement<sup>1</sup> in England, as well as a major influence on American transcendentalism.<sup>2</sup> The following poem is, as the title suggests, the answer to a child's question about birdsong and love. As you read, take notes on the structure of the poem (i.e. rhyme, meter, etc.) and how it helps form the mood.*

[1] Do you ask what the birds say? The sparrow, the dove,  
The linner and thrush<sup>3</sup> say, "I love and I love!"  
In the winter they're silent—the wind is so strong;  
What it says, I don't know, but it sings a loud  
song.

[5] But green leaves, and blossoms, and sunny warm  
weather,  
And singing, and loving—all come back together.  
But the lark<sup>4</sup> is so brimful<sup>5</sup> of gladness and love,  
The green fields below him, the blue sky above,  
That he sings, and he sings; and for ever sings  
he—

[10] "I love my Love, and my Love loves me!"



*"Singing Honeyeater" by Frankzed is licensed under CC BY 2.0.*

*Answer to A Child's Question by Samuel Taylor Coleridge is in the public domain.*

1. The Romantic Movement was a literary and artistic period that lasted from about the late 18th century until 1850. Romanticism was characterized by an emphasis on emotion, individualism, nature, and beauty.
2. Transcendentalism was a philosophical and literary movement that lasted from the early 19th century until about 1900. It focused individualism, believing that both nature and humans are inherently good.
3. The linner and the thrush are types of songbirds.
4. Another type of songbird
5. **Brimful (adjective):** filled with something to the point of overflowing

## Text-Dependent Questions

*Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.*

1. PART A: Which of the following best describes a major theme of the text?
  - A. Love is fleeting, like the seasons, and can be hard to hold on to.
  - B. Nature can teach humans how to be open about their feelings.
  - C. A part of growing up means learning what love really is.
  - D. The joyful songs of birds can inspire listeners to think of love.
  
2. PART B: Which of the following quotes best supports your answer to Part A?
  - A. "Do you ask what the birds say?" (Line 1)
  - B. "In the winter they're silent — the wind is so strong" (Line 3)
  - C. "But the lark is so brimful of gladness and love" (Line 7)
  - D. "That he sings, and he sings; and for ever sings he" (Line 9)
  
3. What does the repetition of "I love" suggest about the speaker's point of view?
  - A. The speaker thinks the child's question is silly and invents an equally silly response.
  - B. The speaker sees the natural world through a playful and imaginative lens.
  - C. The speaker expresses contempt for those who cannot stop talking about love.
  - D. The speaker is reminded of all the love they experienced in their younger days.
  
4. The speaker's use of rhythm in line 9 creates a feeling of...
  - A. love and obsession.
  - B. strength and endurance.
  - C. carefreeness and bliss.
  - D. satisfaction and calm.
  
5. How does the question in line 1 contribute to the overall meaning of this poem?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Snow Packet Day 8

## The Stolen Party

By Liliana Heker

1982

*Lilian Heker (b. 1943) is an Argentine author who has been writing professionally since she was 17. In this short story, Heker explores social class differences through a story about a young girl who attends the birthday party of a friend whose family employs her mother as their housekeeper. As you read, take notes on how different characters view Rosaura's attendance at the party.*

- [1] As soon as she arrived she went straight to the kitchen to see if the monkey was there. It was: what a relief. She wouldn't have liked to admit that her mother had been right. Monkeys at a birthday? Her mother had sneered. Get away with you, believing any nonsense you're told! She was cross, but not because of the monkey, the girl thought; it's just because of the party.

"I don't like you going," she told her. "It's a rich people's party."

"Rich people go to Heaven too," said the girl, who studied religion at school.

"Get away with Heaven," said the mother. "The problem with you, young lady, is that you like to fart higher than your a—."<sup>1</sup>

- [5] The girl didn't approve of the way her mother spoke. She was barely nine, and one of the best in her class.

"I'm going because I've been invited," she said. "And I've been invited because Luciana is my friend. So there."

"Ah yes, your friend," her mother grumbled. She paused. "Listen, Rosaura," she said at last. "That one's not your friend. You know what you are to them? The maid's daughter, that's what."

Rosaura blinked hard: she wasn't going to cry. Then she yelled: "Shut up! You know nothing about being friends!"

Every afternoon she used to go to Luciana's house and they would both finish their homework while Rosaura's mother did the cleaning. They had their tea in the kitchen and they told each other secrets. Rosaura loved everything in the big house, and she also loved the people who lived there.



["Happy birthday wishes"](#) by Just go is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

1. Rosaura's mother uses an expression that includes a curse word.

[10] "I'm going because it will be the most lovely party in the whole world, Luciana told me it would. There will be a magician, and he will bring a monkey and everything."

The mother swung around to take a good look at her child, and pompously<sup>2</sup> put her hands on her hips.

"Monkeys at a birthday?" she said. "Get away with you, believing any nonsense you're told!"

Rosaura was deeply offended.<sup>3</sup> She thought it unfair of her mother to accuse other people of being liars simply because they were rich. Rosaura too wanted to be rich, of course. If one day she managed to live in a beautiful palace, would her mother stop loving her? She felt very sad. She wanted to go to that party more than anything else in the world.

"I'll die if I don't go," she whispered, almost without moving her lips.

[15] She wasn't sure whether she had been heard, but on the morning of the party she discovered that her mother had starched<sup>4</sup> her Christmas dress. And in the afternoon, after washing her hair, her mother rinsed it in apple vinegar so that it would be all nice and shiny. Before going out, Rosaura admired herself in the mirror, with her white dress and glossy hair, and thought she looked terribly pretty. Señora Ines also seemed to notice. As soon as she saw her, she said: "How lovely you look today, Rosaura."

Rosaura gave her starched skirt a slight toss with her hands and walked into the party with a firm step. She said hello to Luciana and asked about the monkey. Luciana put on a secretive look and whispered into Rosaura's ear: "He's in the kitchen. But don't tell anyone, because it's a surprise."

Rosaura wanted to make sure. Carefully she entered the kitchen and there she saw it: deep in thought, inside its cage. It looked so funny that the girl stood there for a while, watching it, and later, every so often, she would slip out of the party unseen and go and admire it. Rosaura was the only one allowed into the kitchen. Señora Ines had said: "You yes, but not the others, they're much too boisterous,<sup>5</sup> they might break something." Rosaura had never broken anything. She even managed the jug of orange juice, carrying it from the kitchen into the dining room. She held it carefully and didn't spill a single drop. And Señora Ines had said: "Are you sure you can manage a jug as big as that?" Of course she could manage. She wasn't a butterfingers,<sup>6</sup> like the others. Like that blonde girl with the bow in her hair. As soon as she saw Rosaura, the girl with the bow had said: "And you? Who are you?"

"I'm a friend of Luciana," said Rosaura.

"No," said the girl with the bow, "you are not a friend of Luciana because I'm her cousin and I know all her friends. And I don't know you."

[20] "So what," said Rosaura. "I come here every afternoon with my mother and we do our homework together."

"You and your mother do your homework together?" asked the girl, laughing.

---

2. **Pompous (adjective):** having a high opinion of one's own importance

3. **Offend (verb):** to cause someone to feel angry, hurt, or upset

4. to make a piece of clothing stiff by dipping it in starch

5. **Boisterous (adjective):** noisy, energetic, or wild

6. Someone who is "butterfingers" is careless and often drops objects.

"I and Luciana do our homework together," said Rosaura, very seriously.

The girl with the bow shrugged her shoulders.

"That's not being friends," she said. "Do you go to school together?"

[25] "No."

"So where do you know her from?" said the girl, getting impatient.

Rosaura remembered her mother's words perfectly. She took a deep breath.

"I'm the daughter of the employee," she said.

Her mother had said very clearly: "If someone asks, you say you're the daughter of the employee; that's all." She also told her to add: "And proud of it." But Rosaura thought that never in her life would she dare say something of the sort.

[30] "What employee?" said the girl with the bow. "Employee in a shop?"

"No," said Rosaura angrily. "My mother doesn't sell anything in any shop, so there."

"So how come she's an employee?" said the girl with the bow.

Just then Señora Ines arrived saying *shh shh*, and asked Rosaura if she wouldn't mind helping serve out the hot dogs, as she knew the house so much better than the others.

"See?" said Rosaura to the girl with the bow, and when no one was looking she kicked her in the shin.

[35] Apart from the girl with the bow, all the others were delightful. The one she liked best was Luciana, with her golden birthday crown; and then the boys. Rosaura won the sack race, and nobody managed to catch her when they played tag. When they split into two teams to play charades, all the boys wanted her for their side. Rosaura felt she had never been so happy in all her life.

But the best was still to come. The best came after Luciana blew out the candles. First the cake. Señora Ines had asked her to help pass the cake around, and Rosaura had enjoyed the task immensely,<sup>7</sup> because everyone called out to her, shouting "Me, me!" Rosaura remembered a story in which there was a queen who had the power of life or death over her subjects. She had always loved that, having the power of life or death. To Luciana and the boys she gave the largest pieces, and to the girl with the bow she gave a slice so thin one could see through it.

After the cake came the magician, tall and bony, with a fine red cape. A true magician: he could untie handkerchiefs by blowing on them and make a chain with links that had no openings. He could guess what cards were pulled out from a pack, and the monkey was his assistant. He called the monkey "partner." "Let's see here, partner," he would say, "turn over a card." And, "Don't run away, partner: time to work now."

---

7. very much or to a great degree



The final trick was wonderful. One of the children had to hold the monkey in his arms and the magician said he would make him disappear.

“What, the boy?” they all shouted.

[40] “No, the monkey!” shouted back the magician.

Rosaura thought that this was truly the most amusing party in the whole world.

The magician asked a small fat boy to come and help, but the small fat boy got frightened almost at once and dropped the monkey on the floor. The magician picked him up carefully, whispered something in his ear, and the monkey nodded almost as if he understood.

“You mustn’t be so unmanly, my friend,” the magician said to the fat boy.

The magician turned around as if to look for spies.

[45] “A sissy,”<sup>8</sup> said the magician. “Go sit down.”

Then he stared at all the faces, one by one. Rosaura felt her heart tremble.

“You with the Spanish eyes,” said the magician. And everyone saw that he was pointing at her.

She wasn’t afraid, neither holding the monkey, nor when the magician made him vanish; not even when, at the end, the magician flung his red cape over Rosaura’s head and uttered a few magic words... and the monkey reappeared, chattering happily, in her arms. The children clapped furiously. And before Rosaura returned to her seat, the magician said: “Thank you very much, my little countess.”<sup>9</sup>

She was so pleased with the compliment that a while later, when her mother came to fetch her, that was the first thing she told her.

[50] “I helped the magician and he said to me, ‘Thank you very much, my little countess.’”

It was strange because up to then Rosaura had thought that she was angry with her mother. All along Rosaura had imagined that she would say to her: “See that the monkey wasn’t a lie?” But instead she was so thrilled that she told her mother all about the wonderful magician.

Her mother tapped her on the head and said: “So now we’re a countess!”

But one could see that she was beaming.

And now they both stood in the entrance, because a moment ago Señora Ines, smiling, had said: “Please wait here a second.” Her mother suddenly seemed worried.

[55] “What is it?” she asked Rosaura.

---

8. a person regarded as a coward

9. a woman of noble status

“What is what?” said Rosaura. “It’s nothing; she just wants to get the presents for those who are leaving, see?”

She pointed at the fat boy and at a girl with pigtails who were also waiting there, next to their mothers. And she explained about the presents. She knew, because she had been watching those who left before her. When one of the girls was about to leave, Señora Ines would give her a bracelet. When a boy left, Señora Ines gave him a yo-yo. Rosaura preferred the yo-yo because it sparkled, but she didn’t mention that to her mother. Her mother might have said: “So why don’t you ask for one, you blockhead?”<sup>10</sup> That’s what her mother was like. Rosaura didn’t feel like explaining that she’d be horribly ashamed to be the odd one out. Instead she said: “I was the best-behaved at the party.”

And she said no more because Señora Ines came out into the hall with two bags, one pink and one blue.

First she went up to the fat boy, gave him a yo-yo out of the blue bag, and the fat boy left with his mother. Then she went up to the girl and gave her a bracelet out of the pink bag, and the girl with the pigtails left as well.

- [60] Finally she came up to Rosaura and her mother. She had a big smile on her face and Rosaura liked that. Señora Ines looked down at her, then looked up at her mother, and then said something that made Rosaura proud:

“What a marvelous daughter you have, Herminia.”

For an instant, Rosaura thought that she’d give her two presents: the bracelet and the yo-yo. Señora Ines bent down as if about to look for something. Rosaura also leaned forward, stretching out her arm. But she never completed the movement.

Señora Ines didn’t look in the pink bag. Nor did she look in the blue bag. Instead she rummaged<sup>11</sup> in her purse. In her hand appeared two bills.

“You really and truly earned this,” she said handing them over. “Thank you for all your help, my pet.”

- [65] Rosaura felt her arms stiffen, stick close to her body, and then she noticed her mother’s hand on her shoulder. Instinctively she pressed herself against her mother’s body. That was all. Except her eyes. Rosaura’s eyes had a cold, clear look that fixed itself on Señora Ines’s face.

Señora Ines, motionless, stood there with her hand outstretched. As if she didn’t dare draw it back. As if the slightest change might shatter an infinitely delicate balance.

*“The Stolen Party” by Lilita Heker, © 1982, which appeared in Other Fires: Short Fiction by Latin American Women, edited and translated by Alberto Manguel, © 1985. Reprinted by permission of Westwood Creative Artists Ltd. and Schavelzon Graham Agencia Literaria (www.schavelzongraham.com).*

---

10. a stupid person

11. **Rummage (verb):** to search by moving, turning, or looking through the contents of a container

## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which statement identifies a theme of the text?
  - A. Class differences are insignificant and people are usually able to look beyond them.
  - B. Children are clueless to how cruel other people can be.
  - C. Class differences can negatively impact the way people are treated.
  - D. Adults are sometimes inexplicably cruel to children.
  
2. PART B: Which passage from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
  - A. "That one's not your friend. You know what you are to them? The maid's daughter, that's what." (Paragraph 7)
  - B. "They had their tea in the kitchen and they told each other secrets. Rosaura loved everything in the big house, and she also loved the people who lived there." (Paragraph 9)
  - C. "Rosaura remembered a story in which there was a queen who had the power of life or death over her subjects." (Paragraph 36)
  - D. "Rosaura didn't feel like explaining that she'd be horribly ashamed to be the odd one out. Instead she said: 'I was the best-behaved at the party.'" (Paragraph 57)
  
3. PART A: What is the meaning of "boisterous" in paragraph 17?
  - A. overactive
  - B. untrustworthy
  - C. uncoordinated
  - D. weak
  
4. PART B: Which detail from paragraph 17 best supports the answer to Part A?
  - A. "Rosaura was the only one allowed into the kitchen."
  - B. "they might break something."
  - C. "She even managed the jug of orange juice,"
  - D. "She wasn't a butterfingers, like the others."
  
5. PART A: How would you describe Rosaura's mother?
  - A. She is hateful towards people with money because she is jealous that she doesn't have money.
  - B. She is not trusting of people with money because she knows they spend it on unnecessary things.
  - C. She is not trusting of people with money because she knows how they treat people without money.
  - D. She is uncaring towards her daughter because she thinks her desires to be rich are silly.

6. PART B: Which quote from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
- A. "Monkeys at a birthday? Her mother had sneered. Get away with you, believing any nonsense you're told!" (Paragraph 1)
  - B. "'Get away with Heaven,' said the mother. 'The problem with you, young lady, is that you like to fart higher than your a\*\*.'" (Paragraph 4)
  - C. "'Listen, Rosaura,' she said at last. 'That one's not your friend. You know what you are to them? The maid's daughter, that's what.'" (Paragraph 7)
  - D. "The mother swung around to take a good look at her child, and pompously put her hands on her hips." (Paragraph 11)

7. What is the "infinitely delicate balance" that the author refers to in paragraph 66?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

8. How does the following sentence from paragraph 19 help develop the plot of the story: "you are not a friend of Luciana because I'm her cousin and I know all her friends. And I don't know you"?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Snow Packet Day 9

## Thank You, M'am

By Langston Hughes

1958

*Langston Hughes (1902-1967) was an American poet, social activist, novelist, and playwright. Hughes is considered one of the leaders of the Harlem Renaissance, which was the cultural, social, and artistic movement of black artists that took place in Harlem from about 1918 until the mid-1930s. In this short story, a boy tries to steal a woman's purse to buy himself a pair of shoes. As you read, take notes on Roger's character traits throughout the story.*

[1] She was a large woman with a large purse that had everything in it but hammer and nails. It had a long strap, and she carried it slung across her shoulder. It was about eleven o'clock at night, and she was walking alone, when a boy ran up behind her and tried to snatch her purse. The strap broke with the single tug the boy gave it from behind. But the boy's weight and the weight of the purse combined caused him to lose his balance so, instead of taking off full blast as he had hoped, the boy fell on his back on the sidewalk, and his legs flew up. The large woman simply turned around and kicked him right



*"Purse" by Mike Maguire is licensed under CC BY 2.0*

square in his blue-jeaned sitter. Then she reached down, picked the boy up by his shirt front, and shook him until his teeth rattled.

After that the woman said, "Pick up my pocketbook, <sup>1</sup> boy, and give it here." She still held him. But she bent down enough to permit him to stoop and pick up her purse. Then she said, "Now ain't you ashamed of yourself?"

Firmly gripped by his shirt front, the boy said, "Yes'm."

The woman said, "What did you want to do it for?"

[5] The boy said, "I didn't aim to."

She said, "You a lie!"

By that time two or three people passed, stopped, turned to look, and some stood watching. "If

I turn you loose, will you run?" asked the woman.

"Yes'm," said the boy.

---

1. another term for purse or handbag

[10] “Then I won’t turn you loose,” said the woman. She did not release him.

“I’m very sorry, lady, I’m sorry,” whispered the boy.

“Um-hum! And your face is dirty. I got a great mind<sup>2</sup> to wash your face for you. Ain’t you got nobody home to tell you to wash your face?”

“No’m,” said the boy.

“Then it will get washed this evening,” said the large woman starting up the street, dragging the frightened boy behind her.

[15] He looked as if he were fourteen or fifteen, frail<sup>3</sup> and willow-wild, in tennis shoes and blue jeans.

The woman said, “You ought to be my son. I would teach you right from wrong. Least I can do right now is to wash your face. Are you hungry?”

“No’m,” said the being-dragged boy. “I just want you to turn me loose.” “Was I

bothering you when I turned that corner?” asked the woman. “No’m.”

“But you put yourself in contact with *me*,” said the woman. “If you think that that contact is not going to last awhile, you got another thought coming. When I get through with you, sir, you are going to remember Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones.”

[20] Sweat popped out on the boy’s face and he began to struggle. Mrs. Jones stopped, jerked him around in front of her, put a half-nelson<sup>4</sup> about his neck, and continued to drag him up the street. When she got to her door, she dragged the boy inside, down a hall, and into a large kitchenette-furnished room at the rear of the house. She switched on the light and left the door open. The boy could hear other roomers<sup>5</sup> laughing and talking in the large house. Some of their doors were open, too, so he knew he and the woman were not alone. The woman still had him by the neck in the middle of her room.

She said, “What is your name?”

“Roger,” answered the boy.

“Then, Roger, you go to that sink and wash your face,” said the woman, whereupon she turned him loose — at last. Roger looked at the door — looked at the woman — looked at the door — *and went to the sink*.

“Let the water run until it gets warm,” she said. “Here’s a clean towel.”

[25] “You gonna take me to jail?” asked the boy, bending over the sink.

---

2. A phrase meaning "to feel tempted or likely to do something"

3. **Frail (adjective):** weak or fragile

4. a wrestling hold in which a wrestler puts their arms under their opponent’s arms and locks their hands behind their opponent’s head

5. a person who lives in a rented room

“Not with that face, I would not take you nowhere,” said the woman. “Here I am trying to get home to cook me a bite to eat and you snatch my pocketbook! Maybe, you ain’t been to your supper either, late as it be. Have you?”

“There’s nobody home at my house,” said the boy.

“Then we’ll eat,” said the woman, “I believe you’re hungry — or been hungry — to try to snatch my pocketbook.”

“I wanted a pair of blue suede<sup>6</sup> shoes,” said the boy.

[30] “Well, you didn’t have to snatch *my* pocketbook to get some suede shoes,” said Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones. “You could of asked me.”

“M’am?”

The water dripping from his face, the boy looked at her. There was a long pause. A very long pause. After he had dried his face and not knowing what else to do dried it again, the boy turned around, wondering what next. The door was open. He could make a dash for it down the hall. He could run, run, run, run, *run!*

The woman was sitting on the day-bed.<sup>7</sup> After a while she said, “I were young once and I wanted things I could not get.”

There was another long pause. The boy’s mouth opened. Then he frowned, but not knowing he frowned.

[35] The woman said, “Um-hum! You thought I was going to say *but*, didn’t you? You thought I was going to say, *but I didn’t snatch people’s pocketbooks*. Well, I wasn’t going to say that.” Pause. Silence. “I have done things, too, which I would not tell you, son — neither tell God, if he didn’t already know. So you set down while I fix us something to eat. You might run that comb through your hair so you will look presentable.”

In another corner of the room behind a screen was a gas plate<sup>8</sup> and an icebox. Mrs. Jones got up and went behind the screen. The woman did not watch the boy to see if he was going to run now, nor did she watch her purse which she left behind her on the day-bed. But the boy took care to sit on the far side of the room where he thought she could easily see him out of the corner of her eye, if she wanted to. He did *not* trust the woman not to trust him. And he did not want to be mistrusted now.

“Do you need somebody to go to the store,” asked the boy, “maybe to get some milk or something?”

“Don’t believe I do,” said the woman, “unless you just want sweet milk yourself. I was going to make cocoa out of this canned milk I got here.”

“That will be fine,” said the boy.

---

6. a type of soft leather

7. a couch that can be used as a sofa by day and a bed by night

8. a hot plate used for cooking

[40] She heated some lima beans and ham she had in the icebox, made the cocoa, and set the table. The woman did not ask the boy anything about where he lived, or his folks, or anything else that would embarrass him. Instead, as they ate, she told him about her job in a hotel beauty-shop that stayed open late, what the work was like, and how all kinds of women came in and out, blondes, red-heads, and Spanish. Then she cut him a half of her ten-cent cake.

“Eat some more, son,” she said.

When they were finished eating she got up and said, “Now, here, take this ten dollars and buy yourself some blue suede shoes. And next time, do not make the mistake of latching onto *my* pocketbook *nor nobody else’s* — because shoes come by devilish like that will burn your feet. I got to get my rest now. But I wish you would behave yourself, son, from here on in.”

She led him down the hall to the front door and opened it. “Good-night! Behave yourself, boy!” she said, looking out into the street.

The boy wanted to say something other than, “Thank you, m’am,” to Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones, but although his lips moved, he couldn’t even say that as he turned at the foot of the barren<sup>9</sup> stoop and looked up at the large woman in the door. He barely managed to say “Thank you” before she shut the door. And he never saw her again.

*“Thank You, M’am” from SHORT STORIES by Langston Hughes. Copyright © 1996 by Ramona Bass and Arnold Rampersad. Reprinted by permission of Hill and Wang, a division of Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Users are warned that this work is protected under copyright laws. The right to reproduce or transfer the work via any medium must be secured with Farrar, Straus and Giroux.*

---

9. **Barren (adjective):** bare or empty



## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which statement best expresses the theme of the story?
  - A. It can be difficult for children to learn right from wrong when there are bad influences around them.
  - B. Children often don't understand that adults have encountered the same challenges they have.
  - C. People are more likely to learn and practice morality when it is taught to them with kindness.
  - D. It's best not to assume the worst in people, as situations can easily be misunderstood.
  
2. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
  - A. "You ought to be my son. I would teach you right from wrong. Least I can do right now is to wash your face. Are you hungry?" (Paragraph 16)
  - B. "There's nobody home at my house," said the boy." (Paragraph 27)
  - C. "I believe you're hungry — or been hungry — to try to snatch my pocketbook." (Paragraph 28)
  - D. "After a while she said, 'I were young once and I wanted things I could not get.'" (Paragraph 33)
  
3. PART A: Why does Roger want to thank Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones at the end of the story?
  - A. Roger has grown to appreciate the faith that Mrs. Jones has in him.
  - B. Roger was suspicious of Mrs. Jones at first, but she shows him that people can be trustworthy.
  - C. Roger appreciates that she did not report him to the police and wants to help his family.
  - D. Roger realizes that Mrs. Jones invited him to her home because she is lonely and wants his company.
  
4. PART B: Which TWO details from the text best support the answer to Part A?
  - A. "Not with that face, I would not take you nowhere," said the woman. "Here I am trying to get home and cook me a bite to eat and you snatch my pocketbook!" (Paragraph 26)
  - B. "After he had dried his face and not knowing what else to do dried it again, the boy turned around, wondering what next. The door was open." (Paragraph 32)
  - C. "Mrs. Jones got up and went behind the screen. The woman did not watch the boy to see if he was going to run now, nor did she watch her purse which she left behind on the day bed." (Paragraph 36)
  - D. "But the boy took care to sit... where he thought she could easily see him out of the corner of her eye...he did not want to be mistrusted now." (Paragraph 36)
  - E. "Instead, as they ate, she told him about her job in a hotel beauty-shop that stayed open late, what the work was like" (Paragraph 40)
  - F. "Now, here, take this ten dollars and buy yourself some blue suede shoes. And next time, do not make the mistake of latching onto my pocketbook nor nobody else's" (Paragraph 42)

5. How does the interaction between Roger and Mrs. Jones in paragraphs 33-41 contribute to the overall meaning of the story?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Snow Packet Day 10

## Examination Day

By Henry Slesar

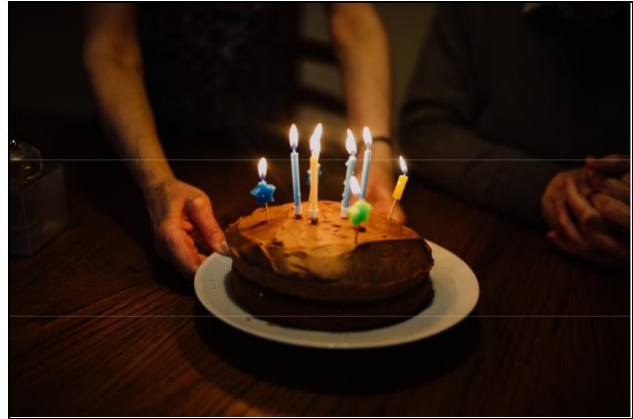
1958

*Henry Slesar (1927-2002) was an American author and playwright. He's known for his use of irony and unexpected endings. In this short science fiction story, a boy is required by the government to take an intelligence exam once he turns 12. As you read, take notes on how the parents describe and react to the upcoming exam.*

- [1] The Jordans never spoke of the exam, not until their son, Dickie, was twelve years old. It was on his birthday that Mrs. Jordan first mentioned the subject in his presence, and the anxious manner of her speech caused her husband to answer sharply.

"Forget about it," he said. "He'll do all right."

They were at breakfast table, and the boy looked up from his plate curiously. He was an alert-eyed youngster with flat blond hair and a quick,



nervous manner. He didn't understand what the ["untitled"](#) by Phil Hearing is licensed under CC0 sudden tension was about, but he did know that

today was his birthday, and he wanted harmony above all. Somewhere in the little apartment there were wrapped, beribboned packages waiting to be opened, and in the tiny wall-kitchen something warm and sweet was being prepared in the automatic stove. He wanted the day to be happy, and the moistness of his mother's eyes, the scowl on his father's face, spoiled the mood of fluttering expectation with which he had greeted the morning.

"What exam?" he asked.

- [5] His mother looked at the tablecloth. "It's just a sort of Government Intelligence test they give children at the age of twelve. You'll be taking it next week. It's nothing to worry about."

"You mean a test like in school?"

"Something like that," his father said, getting up from the table. "Go and read your comics, Dickie." The boy rose and wandered towards that part of the living room which had been "his" corner since infancy. He fingered the topmost comic of the stack, but seemed uninterested in the colorful squares of fast-paced action. He wandered towards the window, and peered gloomily at the veil of mist that shrouded<sup>1</sup> the glass.

"Why did it have to rain today?" he said. "Why couldn't it rain tomorrow?"

1. **Shroud (verb):** to cover so as to hide from view

His father, now slumped into an armchair with the Government newspaper rattled the sheets in vexation.<sup>2</sup> “Because it just did, that’s all. Rain makes the grass grow.”

[10] “Why, Dad?”

“Because it does, that’s all.”

Dickie puckered his brow. “What makes it green, though? The grass?”

“Nobody knows,” his father snapped, then immediately regretted his abruptness. Later in the day, it was birthday time again. His mother beamed as she handed over the gaily-colored<sup>3</sup> packages, and even his father managed a grin and a rumples-of-the-hair. He kissed his mother and shook hands gravely with his father. Then the birthday cake was brought forth, and the ceremonies concluded.

An hour later, seated by the window, he watched the sun force its way between the clouds.

[15] “Dad,” he said, “how far away is the sun?”

“Five thousand miles,” his father said.

Dickie sat at the breakfast table and again saw moisture in his mother’s eyes. He didn’t connect her tears with the exam until his father suddenly brought the subject to light again.

“Well, Dickie,” he said, with a manly frown, “you’ve got an appointment today.”

“I know Dad. I hope –”

[20] “Now, it’s nothing to worry about. Thousands of children take this test every day. The Government wants to know how smart you are, Dickie. That’s all there is to it.”

“I get good marks in school,” he said hesitantly.

“This is different. This is a - special kind of test. They give you this stuff to drink, you see, and then you go into a room where there’s a sort of machine – “

“What stuff to drink?” Dickie said.

“It’s nothing. It tastes like peppermint. It’s just to make sure you answer the questions truthfully. Not that the Government thinks you won’t tell the truth, but it makes sure.” Dickie’s face showed puzzlement, and a touch of fright. He looked at his mother, and she composed her face into a misty smile.

[25] “Everything will be all right,” she said.

“Of course, it will,” his father agreed. “You’re a good boy, Dickie; you’ll make out fine. Then we’ll come home and celebrate. All right?”

---

2. **Vexation (noun):** the state of being annoyed, frustrated, or worried

3. bright or cheerful in appearance

"Yes sir," Dickie said

They entered the Government Educational Building fifteen minutes before the appointed hour. They crossed the marble floors of the great pillared lobby, passed beneath an archway and entered an automatic lift<sup>4</sup> that brought them to the fourth floor. There was a young man wearing an insignia-less<sup>5</sup> tunic, seated at a polished desk in front of Room 404. He held a clipboard in his hand, and he checked the list down to the Js and permitted the Jordans to enter.

The room was as cold and official as a courtroom, with long benches flanking metal tables. There were several fathers and sons already there, and a thin-lipped woman with cropped black hair was passing out sheets of paper.

[30] Mr. Jordan filled out the form, and returned it to the clerk. Then he told Dickie: "It won't be long now. When they call your name, you just go through the doorway at the end of the room." He indicated the portal with his finger.

A concealed loudspeaker crackled and called off the first name. Dickie saw a boy leave his father's side reluctantly and walk slowly towards the door.

At five minutes to eleven, they called the name of Jordan.

"Good luck, son," his father said, without looking at him. "I'll call for you when the test is over."

Dickie walked to the door and turned the knob. The room inside was dim, and he could barely make out the features of the grey-tunicked attendant who greeted him.

[35] "Sit down," the man said softly. He indicated a high stool beside his desk. "Your name's Richard Jordan?"

"Yes, sir."

"Your classification number is 600-115. Drink this, Richard."

He lifted a plastic cup from the desk and handed it to the boy. The liquid inside had the consistency of buttermilk, tasted only vaguely of the promised peppermint. Dickie downed it, and handed the man the empty cup.

He sat in silence, feeling drowsy, while the man wrote busily on a sheet of paper. Then the attendant looked at his watch, and rose to stand only inches from Dickie's face. He unclipped a penlike object from the pocket of his tunic, and flashed a tiny light into the boy's eyes.

[40] "All right," he said. "Come with me, Richard."

He led Dickie to the end of the room, where a single wooden armchair faced a multi-dialed computing machine. There was a microphone on the left arm of the chair, and when the boy sat down, he found its pinpoint head conveniently at his mouth.

---

4. a term for an elevator

5. lacking a symbol or logo

“Now just relax, Richard. You’ll be asked some questions, and you think them over carefully. Then give your answers into the microphone. The machine will take care of the rest.”

“Yes, sir.”

“I’ll leave you alone now. Whenever you want to start, just say “ready” into the microphone.”

[45] “Yes, sir.”

The man squeezed his shoulder, and left.

Dickie said, “Ready.”

Lights appeared on the machine, and a mechanism whirred. A voice said: “Complete this sequence. One, four, seven, ten...’

Mr. and Mrs. Jordan were in the living room, not speaking, not even speculating.<sup>6</sup>

[50] It was almost four o’clock when the telephone rang. The woman tried to reach it first, but her husband was quicker.

“Mr. Jordan?”

The voice was clipped: a brisk, official voice.

“Yes, speaking.”

“This is the Government Educational Service. Your son, Richard M Jordan, Classification 600-115 has completed the Government examination. We regret to inform you that his intelligence quotient<sup>7</sup> is above the Government regulation, according to Rule 84 Section 5 of the New Code.”

[55] Across the room, the woman cried out, knowing nothing except the emotion she read on her husband’s face.

“You may specify by telephone,” the voice droned on, “whether you wish his body interred<sup>8</sup> by the Government, or would you prefer a private burial place? The fee for Government burial is ten dollars.”

*“Examination Day” by Henry Slesar (c) Henry Selsar 1958. Reprinted by permission of the author’s estate.*

---

6. **Speculate (verb):** to form a theory about something without any real evidence  
7. a degree or amount of a quality or characteristic  
8. to place a corpse in a grave or tomb

## Text-Dependent Questions

*Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.*

1. PART A: Which statement best expresses a theme of the short story?
  - A. It's better to downplay your own intelligence.
  - B. The government has been known to violate people's rights.
  - C. High intelligence can be viewed as a dangerous thing.
  - D. People have higher expectations for children as they grow up.
  
2. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
  - A. "They were at breakfast table, and the boy looked up from his plate curiously. He was an alert-eyed youngster with flat blond hair and a quick, nervous manner." (Paragraph 3)
  - B. "Now, it's nothing to worry about. Thousands of children take this test every day. The Government wants to know how smart you are, Dickie. That's all there is to it." (Paragraph 20)
  - C. "Now just relax, Richard. You'll be asked some questions, and you think them over carefully. Then give your answers into the microphone. The machine will take care of the rest." (Paragraph 42)
  - D. "We regret to inform you that his intelligence quotient is above the Government regulation, according to Rule 84 Section 5 of the New Code." (Paragraph 54)
  
3. What do the questions Dickie asks his father between paragraphs 6-16 reveal about Dickie's character?
  - A. They suggest that Dickie doesn't usually get along with his father.
  - B. They show how curious Dickie is about how the world works.
  - C. They stress that Dickie isn't as intelligent as he claims.
  - D. They show how much Dickie relies on his father for simple ideas.
  
4. How does knowledge of the exam affect Dickie's mom and dad?
  - A. Dickie's mom becomes anxious and sad, while Dickie's dad becomes easily irritated.
  - B. Dickie's mom and dad express doubt that their son is ready for the exam.
  - C. Dickie's mom and dad stress about preparing their son for the exam.
  - D. Dickie's mom is not bothered by the exam, while Dickie's dad is upset about it.

5. How does the author use irony to contribute to the story's meaning? Use details from the story to support your answer.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---