



Grade 9

FAST ELA Reading

Sample Test Materials

Answer Key

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The Sentimentality of William Tavener

by Willa Cather

- 1 It takes a strong woman to make any sort of success of living in the West, and Hester undoubtedly was that. When people spoke of William Tavener as the most prosperous farmer in McPherson County, they usually added that his wife was a “good manager.” She was an executive woman, quick of tongue and something of an imperatrix.¹ The only reason her husband did not consult her about his business was that she did not wait to be consulted. . . .
- 2 One spring night Hester sat in a rocking chair by the sitting room window, darning socks. She rocked violently and sent her long needle vigorously back and forth over her gourd, and it took only a very casual glance to see that she was wrought up over something. William sat on the other side of the table reading his farm paper. If he had noticed his wife’s agitation, his calm, clean-shaven face betrayed no sign of concern. He must have noticed the sarcastic turn of her remarks at the supper table, and he must have noticed the moody silence of the older boys as they ate. When supper was but half over little Billy, the youngest, had suddenly pushed back his plate and slipped away from the table, manfully trying to swallow a sob. But William Tavener never heeded ominous forecasts in the domestic horizon, and he never looked for a storm until it broke.
- 3 After supper the boys had gone to the pond under the willows in the big cattle corral, to get rid of the dust of plowing. Hester could hear an occasional splash and a laugh ringing clear through the stillness of the night, as she sat by the open window. She sat silent for almost an hour reviewing in her mind many plans of attack. But she was too vigorous a woman to be much of a strategist, and she usually came to her point with directness. At last she cut her thread and suddenly put her darning down, saying emphatically:
- 4 “William, I don’t think it would hurt you to let the boys go to that circus in town to-morrow.”

¹imperatrix: feminine form of “imperator,” meaning emperor or commander

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- 5 William continued to read his farm paper, but it was not Hester's custom to wait for an answer. She usually divined his arguments and assailed them one by one before he uttered them.
- 6 "You've been short of hands all summer, and you've worked the boys hard, and a man ought use his own flesh and blood as well as he does his hired hands. We're plenty able to afford it, and it's little enough our boys ever spend. I don't see how you can expect 'em to be steady and hard workin', unless you encourage 'em a little. I never could see much harm in circuses, and our boys have never been to one. . . . The animals are real instructive, an' our boys don't get to see much out here on the prairie. It was different where we were raised, but the boys have got no advantages here, an' if you don't take care, they'll grow up to be greenhorns."²
- 7 Hester paused a moment, and William folded up his paper, but vouchsafed no remark. His sisters in Virginia had often said that only a quiet man like William could ever have lived with Hester Perkins. Secretly, William was rather proud of his wife's "gift of speech"
- 8 Hester shook out another sock and went on.
- 9 "Nobody was ever hurt by goin' to a circus. Why, law me! I remember I went to one myself once, when I was little. I had most forgot about it. It was over at Pewtown, an' I remember how I had set my heart on going. I don't think I'd ever forgiven my father if he hadn't taken me, though that red clay road was in a frightful way after the rain. I mind they had an elephant and six poll parrots, an' a Rocky Mountain lion, an' a cage of monkeys, an' two camels. My! but they were a sight to me then!"
- 10 Hester dropped the black sock and shook her head and smiled at the recollection. She was not expecting anything from William yet, and she was fairly startled when he said gravely
- 11 "No, there was only one camel. The other was a dromedary."
- 12 She peered around the lamp and looked at him keenly.
- 13 "Why, William, how come you to know?"
- 14 William folded his paper and answered with some hesitation, "I was there, too."

²greenhorns: people who are inexperienced

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- 15 Hester's interest flashed up.—“Well, I never, William! To think of my finding it out after all these years! Why, you couldn't have been much bigger'n our Billy then. . . .”
- 16 “I reckon I shouldn't 'a gone,” he said slowly, “but boys will do foolish things. I had done a good deal of fox hunting the winter before, and father let me keep the bounty money. I hired Tom Smith's Tap to weed the corn for me, an' I slipped off unbeknownst to father an' went to the show.”
- 17 Hester spoke up warmly: “Nonsense, William! It didn't do you no harm, I guess. You was always worked hard enough. It must have been a big sight for a little fellow. That clown must have just tickled you to death.”
- 18 William crossed his knees and leaned back in his chair.
- 19 “I reckon I could tell all that fool's jokes now. . . .”
- 20 Hester drew her chair still nearer William's. Since the children had begun growing up, her conversation with her husband had been almost wholly confined to questions of economy and expense. Their relationship had become purely a business one, like that between landlord and tenant. In her desire to indulge her boys she had unconsciously assumed a defensive and almost hostile attitude towards her husband. No debtor ever haggled with his usurer more doggedly than did Hester with her husband in behalf of her sons. The strategic contest had gone on so long that it had almost crowded out the memory of a closer relationship. This exchange of confidences to-night, when common recollections took them unawares and opened their hearts, had all the miracle of romance. They talked on and on; of old neighbors, of old familiar faces in the valley where they had grown up, of long forgotten incidents of their youth—weddings, picnics, sleighing parties For years they had talked of nothing else but butter and eggs and the prices of things, and now they had as much to say to each other as people who meet after a long separation.
- 21 When the clock struck ten, William rose and went over to his walnut secretary and unlocked it. From his red leather wallet he took out a ten dollar bill and laid it on the table beside Hester.
- 22 “Tell the boys not to stay late, an' not to drive the horses hard,” he said quietly, and went off to bed.

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- 23 Hester blew out the lamp and sat still in the dark a long time. She left the bill lying on the table where William had placed it. She had a painful sense of having missed something, or lost something; she felt that somehow the years had cheated her.

Excerpt from "The Sentimentality of William Tavener" by Willa Cather. In the public domain.

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1. Fill in the bubble **before** the sentence from paragraph 2 that shows that William is more aware of situations than others think he is.

Ⓐ "William sat on the other side of the table reading his farm paper.

Ⓑ If he had noticed his wife's agitation, his calm, clean-shaven face betrayed no sign of concern. ● He must have noticed the sarcastic turn of her remarks at the supper table, and he must have noticed the moody silence of the older boys as they ate. Ⓓ When supper was but half over little Billy, the youngest, had suddenly pushed back his plate and slipped away from the table, manfully trying to swallow a sob.

Ⓔ But William Tavener never heeded ominous forecasts in the domestic horizon, and he never looked for a storm until it broke."

(paragraph 2)

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2. Read this paragraph from the passage.

5 William continued to read his farm paper, but it was not Hester's custom to wait for an answer. She usually divined his arguments and assailed them one by one before he uttered them.

What is the meaning of assailed as it is used in the passage?

- Ⓐ explained
- Ⓑ fought
- Ⓒ ignored
- Ⓓ understood

Option B: This answer is correct. Hester does not wait for William to answer but immediately begins to fight each of what she knows will be his arguments against letting the boys go to the circus.

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3. Read these sentences from the passage.

“I mind they had an elephant and six poll parrots, an’ a Rocky Mountain lion, an’ a cage of monkeys, an’ two camels. My! but they were a sight to me then!” (paragraph 9)

How does this memory from Hester’s childhood affect the mood in this section?

- by describing how wondrous the circus was
- by describing the circus as a confusing experience
- by revealing that Hester longs to go back to the circus again
- by showing that Hester regrets not having appreciated the circus

Option A: This answer is correct. The way Hester describes what she saw at the circus emphasizes how awestruck she was.

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4. How does the last paragraph of the passage reveal Hester’s internal conflict?
- Ⓐ It suggests that Hester no longer believes the good things others say about her.
 - Ⓑ It shows a difference between how others see Hester and what she is really like.
 - Ⓒ It raises the question of whether Hester will still be concerned about the family business.
 - It implies that Hester has regrets about neglecting a relationship that is important to her.

Option D: This answer is correct. In paragraph 1, Hester’s focus on being a good manager and thrifty partner is introduced. In the final paragraph, Hester realizes she actually has given up something more important: companionship with her husband.

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5. How does using an omniscient narrator develop irony in the passage?

- by foreshadowing William’s participation in the conversation
- Ⓐ by revealing how William and Hester have changed over time
- Ⓑ by showing what other people think about William and Hester
- Ⓓ by implying that William’s memories of the circus are incomplete

Option A: This answer is correct. The omniscient narrator allows the reader to know that William is listening while also showing that Hester does not think he is, creating dramatic irony.

FAST ELA Reading Sample Items Answer Key

6. This question has two parts. First, answer Part A. Then, answer Part B.

Part A

How does the author develop the theme that habits and routine can cause people to take each other for granted?

- Ⓐ by showing how Hester stands up for her children
- Ⓑ by recalling William’s experience at the circus as a child
- Ⓒ by describing how Hester and William’s relationship has changed
- Ⓓ by explaining why Hester and William are interested in the circus

Part B

Which detail from the passage shows how the author develops the theme from Part A?

- Ⓐ ““Why, you couldn’t have been much bigger’n our Billy then. . . .” (paragraph 15)
- Ⓑ “No debtor ever haggled with his usurer more doggedly than did Hester with her husband in behalf of her sons.” (paragraph 20)
- Ⓒ “The strategic contest had gone on so long that it had almost crowded out the memory of a closer relationship.” (paragraph 20)
- Ⓓ ““Tell the boys not to stay late, an’ not to drive the horses hard,” he said quietly, and went off to bed.” (paragraph 22)

Part A

Option C: This answer is correct. The author describes in detail how their relationship has changed through the years and how this has resulted in their taking each other for granted.

Part B

Option C: This answer is correct. This sentence shows how their relationship has changed, and in fact it has changed so much that it is difficult for them to remember what it once was.

How do we know when a species at risk has recovered? It's not just a matter of numbers

by H. Resit Akcakaya,
Stony Brook University

- 1 Around the world, animals and plants are disappearing at alarming rates. In May 2019, a major U.N. report warned that around one million species were at risk of extinction—more than at any other time in human history.
- 2 Conservation scientists like me focus on predicting and preventing extinctions. But we see that as an essential first step, not a final goal. Ultimately, we want species to recover.
- 3 The challenge is that while extinction is easy to define, recovery is not. Until recently, there was no general definition of a “recovered” species. As a result, some species recovery plans are much less ambitious than others, and scientists don’t have a common yardstick for recognizing conservation successes.
- 4 To address this challenge, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature’s Species Survival Commission—the world’s largest network of conservationists—is developing a Green List of Species to highlight species recovery. This tool will complement the well-known Red List, which highlights endangered species.
- 5 While the Red List focuses on extinction risk, the Green List will measure recovery and conservation success. As a member of the team charged with making the Green List a practical conservation tool, I see it as a way of measuring the impact of conservation and communicating conservation success stories, as well as learning from failures.

Defining recovery

- 6 To know how much conservation has accomplished, and to encourage ambitious conservation goals, we need an objective way to measure progress toward a species’ recovery. Studies of recovery plans developed under the U.S. Endangered Species Act show that some plans consider a species recovered even if its population remains the

same or shrinks during the recovery effort. A standard definition of recovery would prevent such inconsistencies and encourage wildlife managers to aim higher.

7 Conservation scientists have long attempted to identify different facets of species recovery. Reviewing these efforts, our team came up with several requirements for considering a species fully recovered.

8 As I explain with an international group of colleagues in a new study, one key idea is that populations of the species should be “functional.” By this we mean that they are able to perform all the roles that the species is known to play in ecosystems where it exists. This may seem like an obvious measurement, but in fact, some species that are considered to be “recovered” in the U.S. fail this test.

What’s your function?

9 Each species has many kinds of ecological functions. For example, bees help plants reproduce by pollinating them. When birds and bats eat fruits and later excrete the seeds, they help forests regenerate.

10 Similarly, when salmon swim upstream to spawn and then are consumed by bears and other predators, that process moves essential nutrients from the oceans up into rivers and forests. And when flammable grasses burn in the U.S. Southeast, they fuel fires that maintain longleaf pine forests.

11 All these critical functions are possible only when enough members of the key species are present. Put another way, keeping a species alive is not enough—it also is essential to keep its functions from going extinct.

Functional extinction

12 Scientists have known for decades that species may persist at such low numbers that they do not fulfill the ecological roles they used to perform. This can be true even if significant numbers of animals or plants are present.

13 One example is the American bison, which is a great conservation success story in terms of preventing its extinction. Hunting reduced bison to just a few hundred individuals in western states at the end of the 19th century, but conservation initiatives have restored them to public, private and Native American lands across the West.

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- 14 Today bison do not appear to be at risk of extinction. However, they occupy less than 1% of their historical range, and most of the roughly 500,000 animals that exist today are raised for commercial purposes. Fewer than 20,000 bison live in conservation herds—a small fraction of their pre-Columbian population, which totaled millions or tens of millions.
- 15 Before they were reduced to near-extinction, bison shaped prairie habitats and landscapes through wallowing, pounding and grazing. They influenced ecosystems by converting vegetation into protein biomass for predators, including people, and by redistributing nutrients in these ecosystems.
- 16 Even though bison are not at risk of extinction, for the purposes of their contributions to the ecosystems and landscapes they once inhabited, I believe the species should be considered to be functionally extinct and not a fully recovered species.
- 17 This does not mean its conservation is a failure. To the contrary, according to new conservation metrics that I and other scientists have proposed for the Green List, the bison would receive high scores on several counts, including Conservation Legacy—meaning it has benefited significantly from past protective efforts—and Conservation Gain, or potential to respond positively to further initiatives.

A full recovery

- 18 For contrast, consider another species widely viewed as a conservation success story: the osprey. Populations of this fish-eating bird of prey crashed across North America in the 1950s to 1970s, primarily due to poisoning from the insecticide DDT and its derivatives.
- 19 Conservation efforts since then, including a federal ban on DDT and provision of nesting structures, have resulted in a dramatic recovery, back to population levels before the declines. Actually, many U.S. and Canadian populations of osprey now exceed historical numbers. Under the Green List criteria we are proposing, this species would now be considered ecologically functional in most if not all parts of its range.

Ambitious goals

- 20 Conservation scientists have long considered a species' influence on others and on the ecosystems it inhabits to be a fundamental aspect of its essence and its intrinsic value. The Green List of Species initiative seeks to go beyond simply preventing extinctions to defining recovered

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species as those that are ecologically functional across their natural ranges. This new focus aims to encourage conservation optimism by highlighting success stories and showing that with help, species once at risk can reclaim their places in the web of life.

“How do we know when a species at risk has recovered? It’s not just a matter of numbers” by H. Resit Akcakaya, from *The Conversation*. Licensed under the Creative Commons CC BY-ND 4.0 license.

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7. How does the author establish his credibility to discuss the topic?

- Ⓐ by describing his goals
- Ⓑ by describing his opinions
- by describing his research
- Ⓓ by describing his frustrations

*Option C: **This answer is correct.** The author establishes his credibility by describing his research, which is directly related to the topic at hand.*

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8. This question has two parts. First, answer Part A. Then, answer Part B.

Part A

How does the author support the claim that determining whether a species has recovered is a complicated issue?

- He provides historical instances of endangered and recovered species.
- He shows which recovered species are at risk of becoming endangered again.
- He gives his personal opinions about which endangered species most deserve to recover.
- He explains conservational recovery needs to be addressed by many people in different fields.

Part B

Which sentence from the passage supports the answer in Part A?

- “. . . I see it as a way of measuring the impact of conservation and communicating conservation success stories, as well as learning from failures.” (paragraph 5)
- “A standard definition of recovery would prevent such inconsistencies and encourage wildlife managers to aim higher.” (paragraph 6)
- “And when flammable grasses burn in the U.S. Southeast, they fuel fires that maintain longleaf pine forests.” (paragraph 10)
- “One example is the American bison, which is a great conservation success story in terms of preventing its extinction.” (paragraph 13)

Part A

Option A: This answer is correct. The author uses historical examples of bison and osprey to support his main argument.

Part B

Option D: This answer is correct. This quote sets up the idea that the author will provide historical examples of endangered and recovered species, supporting the answer in Part A.

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9. Fill in the bubbles to select how each subheading contributes to the purpose of the passage.

	Defining recovery	What's your function?	Functional extinction
states the author's goal	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> C
details a specific example	<input type="radio"/> D	<input type="radio"/> E	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
provides background information	<input type="radio"/> G	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> I

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10. What is the meaning of the word metrics as it is used in paragraph 17?

- Ⓐ laws to consider
- Ⓑ guidelines to follow
- Ⓒ ideas to implement
- standards to measure

Option D: This answer is correct. The author mentions that animals will be scored using metrics proposed by the Green List.

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11. Which method does the author use to gain support for the Green List?

- Ⓐ He explains how the Green List scores recovered species.
- Ⓑ He relies on his experience to create guidelines for the Green List.
- Ⓒ He describes how the Green List could be used to influence policymakers.
- Ⓓ He evaluates the health of the osprey population according to the Green List.

Option B: This answer is correct. The author describes how he and his fellow scientists created the guidelines of the Green List and, in doing so, provides evidence as to why it matters.

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12. This question has two parts. First, answer Part A. Then, answer Part B.

Part A

What is a central idea of the text?

- Ⓐ More species are at risk of extinction now than at any other point in human history.
- Ⓑ Conversations about extinction should be tied to the ability of a species to fulfill its ecological role.
- Ⓒ The attempts of certain countries to enact policies to promote the recovery of endangered species have failed.
- Ⓓ Efforts that include prescribed conservation measures will still fail to recover endangered species at acceptable rates.

Part B

How does the author convey the central idea from Part A?

- Ⓐ by listing examples of the efforts to implement policies
- Ⓑ by mentioning the species that are currently endangered
- Ⓒ by detailing the environmental functions of different species
- Ⓓ by specifying the environmental impacts of conservation policies

Part A

Option B: This answer is correct. Species recovery is tied not only to numbers but also to ecological function.

Part B

Option C: This answer is correct. The author uses explanations of different species' functions to show how all species on Earth are interconnected and that a species' recovery is dependent on its ability to fulfill its conservational goal.



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