

## R 3.3

(Test ID: ins708104)

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Read the following passage and answer the question(s).

### Playing Pilgrims

Adapted from *Playing Pilgrims*, a chapter from the book Little Women by Louisa May Alcott, public domain.

*Louisa May Alcott was born in Germantown, Pennsylvania in 1832. Living in New England, during the Civil War, Louisa experienced many adventures with her other three sisters. In 1858, Louisa and her family moved to the Orchard House on Lexington Road in Concord. This became the setting for her most famous novel Little Women. The central character, Jo March, is built around Louisa May Alcott herself.*

It was another memorable Christmas season filled with velvety snow, toasty fireplaces, and a quaint house in the company of four March sisters – Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy. Alas, this season also took place during the war, a war that stole the sister's beloved father away.

Jo protested, "Christmas will not be the same without any presents."

"I so loathe being poor!" sighed Meg, while looking down at her anciently tattered dress. Amy furthered this with an injured sniff, "I don't think it is fair for some girls to have a whole wardrobe bursting with pretty pinafores, while other girls have nothing at all. However, Beth reminded her sisters that they had a wonderful father and mother as well as each other.

Despite their lack of riches, each sister had a dollar to spend for Christmas. At first, Jo and Amy wanted to spend the money on themselves, but their unselfish sister, Beth, encouraged them to buy something for their mother instead. "I shall get mother some new slippers with my dollar," said Beth. "No, I shall!" cried Amy. Meg chimed in, "I'm the oldest." Then Jo cut in with a decisive, "I'm the head of the family while Papa is away; I shall provide the slippers for Marmee." After much bickering, the girls decided to each buy Marmee their own gift. "Let's let Marmee think we are going into town to shop for ourselves, and then surprise her. There is so much to do before we perform our Christmas play tomorrow night," reminded Jo. Meg rolled her eyes and whined, "Oh, how I love acting in our plays." Amy looked at Meg and sighed.

The four sisters practiced the play for some time. With a little playful banter, they finally came to the end of rehearsal, which ended in a general burst of laughter. "It's the best we've had yet," cheered Meg. They were quieted by a joyous voice at the door. "Glad to find you all so cheerful, my darlings," said Marmee. "I've got a special treat to give you after supper." A smile spread throughout the room like a streak of sunshine spreads across a fresh horizon. Jo exclaimed, "A letter from father!"

Once supper had ended, the four March daughters sat around Marmee as she read their father's letter from the war. The letter was full of love and kind reminders of acting like "little women." Many tears were shed in the room that night. "I'll try and be what he loves to call me, 'a little woman' and not be so rough and wild," cried Jo.

In order to break the cheerless mood, Marmee reminded her daughters of a pastime they used to play as children, called *Pilgrim's Progress*. The March women talked about the tale with much pleasure and acted out the Pilgrim's trials in the story. *Pilgrim's Progress* was followed by Marmee's illustrious singing. She was blessed with such an angelic tone. Ever since the girls were young, Marmee's voice would resonate beautiful melodies in their ears. The March daughters never got too old to hear those familiar lullabies. Nightfall had enveloped their spirits and soon the exhausted girls went to bed.

(Question 1)

1

Below is a poem similar in theme to "Playing Pilgrims." Read it, and then answer the question that follows.

The Gift

I ripped the wrapping paper, thrashed, and tore.  
I'd been waiting for this moment.  
Ugh! Not what I was looking for.

Inside the box was an object green,  
An object so foul,  
The worst mine eyes had seen.

This MP3 player should have been red,  
Not this repulsive hue.  
Oh, how I wished I were dead.

Then Mom reminded me from whence it had been sent,  
That in the army my brother has few choices,  
And even less time to make them.  
Out of shape I should not have been bent.

I synchronized my music onto this decent device,  
Put my headphones on and laid in the sand,  
Wondering if you, brother, were doing the same,  
Only instead of watching the clouds go by,  
You were trying to stay alive.

**What do both the March sisters from "Playing Pilgrims" and the narrator in the poem have in common?**

- A** They misunderstand the lessons their parents teach them.
- B** They only want what is good for themselves.
- C** They are discontent but gain perspective in the end.
- D** They are kind to their family members.

**Read the passage and answer the following question(s).**

**Thursday's Lesson**

"Whatever you do, don't step on weird Mrs. Lundstrom's front yard."

That was the advice my big sister, Casey, gave me every morning before we left for school. I had heard this almost every day since I was in the first grade; because I always looked up to Casey, I never really questioned her. I didn't know why she called Mrs. Lundstrom "weird." Maybe it had something to do with the fact that her husband died a few years before. I didn't know why I was supposed to stay off that front yard. I just figured that something bad would happen if I trespassed on Mrs. Lundstrom's property, and that was all I needed to know... at least until one particular Thursday.

My best friend, Victor, met me in front of my house at eight o'clock sharp as he had done for the last two years. "Is Casey comin' with us today? Remember what we said. We're in fifth grade now. We can walk alone. Don't ya think?" asked Victor in a soft voice to keep Casey from hearing him.

We'd talked about this for weeks, but today we were finally going to do it.

"Yeah, let's get outta here before she comes out of the house," I said.

Victor and I literally ran down the street to get out of view. When we turned left onto Marcus Lane, we slowed down, thinking we were out of Casey's sight. As we approached the corner, I looked behind me and saw Casey heading in our direction. I looked to the left to see Mrs. Lundstrom's house laughing at us, as if daring us to walk on the yard.



Her house is located on the corner of Marcus Lane and Maple Avenue, the street our school is on. Running through her yard would allow us to cut across the corner, and this would save us time. Her front yard is forested with trees of all sizes and shapes that could hide us if Casey approached. This opportunity would provide the perfect getaway.

"Let's cut across Mrs. Lundstrom's lawn!" I yelled. "Casey's coming, and I just can't stand to listen to another one of her lectures about how I should walk with her to school. If we see her coming, we can hide behind one of those big trees, and Casey will walk right past us."

"Yeah, but this is weird Mrs. Lundstrom's yard and..." began Victor.

"Oh, quit worrying so much. You know Casey. She probably made up that whole thing to scare us."

Victor stood on the sidewalk, waiting for me to make the first move. It tickled me to see how timid he was, but he was never one to try something first. I took one step onto the lawn.

"Do you think Mrs. Lundstrom's mean or something? What if she sees us?" asked Victor.

"Oh, come on. Don't be silly. There are so many trees that we can hide behind. She'll never see us."

I spotted a huge evergreen that would hide me if need be, so I started sprinting in its direction. I suddenly heard a hissing sound coming from the ground. I stopped abruptly in fear of scaring a creature that might be lurking in one of the flower gardens. I looked toward Victor, and there was Casey standing behind him, panting. I was just about to say something when water started spraying all over me. The sprinklers had come on! Mrs. Lundstrom appeared on her front porch.

"Wait just a minute, young man." I could feel my heart thumping. "Let me turn these darn things off. My late husband set them to go off if an intruder came by. You don't appear to be an intruder. In fact, you don't look like you could harm a fly. I'm so sorry. Let me get a towel. Don't go away."

Casey had the broadest smile on her face. I could tell that she and Victor were about to start laughing.

"So this is the big reason to stay off of her yard? How did you know this, Casey? Did this ever happen to you? Huh? Huh?"

Casey just stood there with virtually no expression on her face. I could tell right then that she too had experienced an embarrassing spraying in Mrs. Lundstrom's yard.



(Question 2)

2

**Which statement BEST explains why Victor and the narrator want to walk to school without Casey?**

- A** They were tired of always being told what to do by everyone.
- B** They knew the way to school and knew they would not get lost.
- C** They felt they were old enough to take care of themselves on the way to school.
- D** They were late and did not want to wait for her.

**Read the passages and answer the following question(s).**

### **The Sound**

"Gee Grandpa, I've never heard that hissing sound before. What is that?" asked Randolph during an evening walk through the forest.

"Legend has it that the hissing began over a hundred years ago," responded Grandpa Luke. As Grandpa Luke began telling the story, Randolph listened intently to every word. He strained to understand the story's relationship to the eerie sound that continued to echo through the trees.

According to Grandpa Luke, this local legend involved a woman named Agatha and her son, Charles, who resided together in a nearby house in the late 1800s.

"Legend has it that Charles and Agatha argued about everything they ever did, whether it was something important or something insignificant. One day, they were so angry that they said appalling things to each other. Angered and frustrated, Agatha left the house to journey through the woods alone. She decided that a walk in the snow would cool her off both inside and out.

When Agatha was nearly a mile from her house, the ground beneath her started to shake tremendously. The volcano, which had not been noticed in thousands of years, had decided to show off its power once again. Agatha ran as fast as a fox in an effort to find Charles, whom she believed was at home feeling as dreadful as she did.

'I'm being punished for the despicable things I said to poor Charles!' she yelled loudly in desperation.

After what seemed like hours, Agatha reached her home, and could not find Charles anywhere. She ran outside in a state of panic and advanced up the mountain where Charles liked to spend his afternoons exploring. Agatha struggled to make her way through the snow, which was like powder. She caught sight of Charles in the distance, holding onto a tree and crying audibly. Just as the words 'I'm sorry' exited both of their mouths, the hissing sound of boiling lava melting the snow overpowered them both. No one has ever seen either one of them again."

"So what does that have to do with the hissing sound we're hearing now?" questioned Randolph.

"It is the sound of Agatha and Charles saying that they are sorry and that they love each other," concluded Grandpa Luke.

As Randolph walked back to Grandpa Luke's cabin, he was unable to speak. His mind was occupied with the thoughts of Agatha and Charles, and of all the mean things Randolph had ever said to Grandpa Luke. "I love you, Grandpa, and...I'm sorry," was all he could vocalize. Grandpa Luke glanced in Randolph's direction and smiled with content.

### **The Harmful Sting**

Without remorse, he decided to flee  
 After the sting of her tongue  
 Had hardly begun  
 To insist he had no right to be. Loneliness arrived and forced her to see  
 The harm she had done  
 To her special someone.  
 Did she not know he would disagree? Several years passed by  
 Until one faithful moment  
 When he happened to drift her way. As she tried to justify  
 What she really had meant  
 He hugged her and announced he would stay.

(Question 3)

3

**Agatha in "The Sound" and the narrator in the poem "The Harmful Sting" both \_\_\_\_\_**

- A** felt guilty for the hurtful things they said to their loved ones.
- B** enjoyed taking walks into nature.
- C** were able to enjoy the feeling of being reconciled with the people they said hurtful things to.
- D** felt they were being punished for their actions

**Read the passage and answer the following question(s).**

**Paper Route**

Jameson decided that he despised his newspaper route and always would. It was piercingly cold that morning and a winter storm rumbled threateningly overhead.

"It's like I'm stuck in Dad's generation! Who delivers newspapers anymore, and why do I have to get up at four in the morning just because he says it builds character?!" he raged for the hundredth time that morning. He flung a paper, angrily, much too hard, and it glanced off Mrs. Lincolnshire's porch, striking one of her terra cotta planters. It shattered, scattering the rich, dark soil around a thriving miniature rosebush.

"Great," fumed Jameson sarcastically, "there goes part of my measly paycheck for this route."

"When I was your age, I had a paper route. It did me good, and besides, it gave me an appreciation for the miracles that happen in nature so early in the morning. Take a look around you between deliveries, Jameson, and you'll see what I mean," his father had advised just last night at dinner.

"Pass the green beans," Jameson had muttered back, with a surly expression.

It was five o'clock now and there was no miracle in sight. He sighed, wishing that he hadn't thrown that paper so hard and broken Mrs. Lincolnshire's pot. It would be like getting water from the moon, if she didn't hold him responsible for it.

Steering his bicycle into Larchmont Alley, the shortcut to the last street on his route, Jameson rubbed his sleepy eyes with one hand and yawned immensely. He'd give his right hand to be back in his warm bed right now, beneath the quiet comfort of his goose-down comforter. A small meow from a dark corner of the alley jerked him from his reverie. Stopping his bicycle, Jameson peered into the early morning gloom and watched as a greasy cardboard box shifted slightly in the corner. Suddenly curious, Jameson parked his bike and moved toward the box. Looking inside, he saw a scrawny, damp mother cat and a full litter of newborn kittens nestling blindly and anxiously beside her. She opened her mouth, her jaw shivering, and cried out to him piteously. Her eyes pleaded with him, and Jameson suddenly realized that he had just encountered his first paper route miracle.

"It's amazing you're alive," he murmured reassuringly at the mother cat, "but, I'll be back in a few minutes with milk and blankets for you and your kittens."

Bicycling home after delivering papers to the last street on his route, Jameson thought about the mother cat's plight. His heart filled with an odd mixture of shame, relief, and gratitude; he decided then that he would ask his parents if he could bring the cat family home with him later after he'd fed and blanketed them. He pedaled faster, realizing that he'd need to hurry before the storm broke. The mother cat, with her perseverance and sense of responsibility, had just taught Jameson an important lesson.

(Question 4)



4

**Although Jameson and his father are portrayed differently, what do they have in common?**

- A** They both experienced miracles in nature while working on a paper route.
- B** They both hated working on a paper route.
- C** They both enjoy reading the newspaper.
- D** They both found a mother cat on their paper routes.

**Read the poem and answer the following question(s).**

**John Henry**

When John Henry was a lil' baby,  
Sittin' on his mamma's knee  
He gave out a long and a lonesome cry  
"Gonna be a steel-drivin' man,  
Lawd, Lawd, Gonna be a steel-drivin' man."

Cap'n says to John Henry,  
"Gonna bring me a steam drill 'round.  
Gonna take that steam drill out on the job,  
Gonna whop that steel on down,  
Lawd, Lawd, gonna whop that steel on down."

John Henry tol' his cap'n,  
Lightnin' was in his eye:  
"Cap'n, bet yo' las' red cent on me,  
Fo' I'll beat it to the bottom or I'll die,  
Lawd, Lawd, I'll beat it to the bottom or I'll die."

Sun shine hot and burnin',  
Wer'n't no breeze a-tall,  
Sweat ran down like water down a hill,  
That day John Henry let his hammer fall,  
Lawd, Lawd, that day John Henry  
let his hammer fall.

John Henry started on the right hand,  
The steam drill started on the left,  
"Before I'd let this steam drill beat me down,  
I'd hammer my fool self to death,  
Lawd, Lawd, I'd hammer my fool self to death."

John Henry he told his shaker,  
"Now Shaker why don' you sing?  
I'm throwin' nine pounds from my hips on down,  
Just listen to the cold steel ring,  
Lawd, Lawd, just listen to the cold steel ring."

The man that invented the steam drill,  
Thought he was mighty fine.  
John Henry drove his fifteen feet,  
An' the steam drill only made nine,  
Lawd, Lawd, the steam drill only made nine.

John Henry he told his Captain,  
"Looky yonder, boy, what do I see?  
Your drill's done broke and your hole's done choke  
And you can't drive steel like me,  
Lawd, Lawd, you can't drive steel like me."

John Henry hammerin' in the mountain  
'Til the handle of his hammer caught fire,  
He drove so hard 'til he broke his poor heart,  
Then he laid down his hammer and he died,  
Lawd, Lawd, he laid down his hammer and he died.

They took John Henry to the tunnel,  
And they buried him in the sand,  
An' every locomotive come rollin' by  
Say, "There lays a steel-drivin' man,  
Lawd, Lawd, there lays a steel-drivin' man."

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(Question 5)

5

**Which statement best states the contrast between John Henry and the captain?**

- A** John Henry values hard physical labor while the captain values technology.
- B** John Henry is strong while the captain is weak.
- C** John Henry is commanding and the captain is submissive.
- D** John Henry is prideful while the captain is humble.