AP English Literature Practice

Use this key to check answers and read the explanations.

1. “The ferry schedule had been painted on the wall for thirty years. When the harbor bought a new boat, Mara scraped off every time but six fifteen. ‘People still look for that one,’ she told the supervisor. Before leaving, she set the waiting-room clock six minutes slow, as her father had done.” What does Mara’s decision to keep one painted time suggest about her attitude toward the passengers?

A. She recognizes that passengers still rely on a familiar routine
B. She assumes passengers prefer schedules for the new boat
C. She believes most passengers cannot read the clock
D. She thinks few passengers will return until the paint dries

Correct answer: A. She recognizes that passengers still rely on a familiar routine
Mara explains that people still look for six fifteen. Her decision preserves something passengers expect to find.

2. “The ferry schedule had been painted on the wall for thirty years. When the harbor bought a new boat, Mara scraped off every time but six fifteen. ‘People still look for that one,’ she told the supervisor. Before leaving, she set the waiting-room clock six minutes slow, as her father had done.” What does the waiting room allow the passage to show?

A. The ease of replacing the schedule with the clock alone
B. The isolation of the harbor from its regular passengers
C. A new ferry service and old habits sharing the same space
D. A conflict between passengers who arrive from different towns

Correct answer: C. A new ferry service and old habits sharing the same space
Mara revises the painted schedule as the boat is replaced. The wall and clock still show traces of older routines.

3. “The ferry schedule had been painted on the wall for thirty years. When the harbor bought a new boat, Mara scraped off every time but six fifteen. ‘People still look for that one,’ she told the supervisor. Before leaving, she set the waiting-room clock six minutes slow, as her father had done.” How does the final detail about Mara’s father affect the reader’s view of her actions?

A. It proves that her father ordered the harbor to keep the old schedule
B. It links the clock adjustment to a habit passed down in her family
C. It identifies a mistake that she corrects before leaving
D. It suggests she has copied the supervisor’s current practice

Correct answer: B. It links the clock adjustment to a habit passed down in her family
The reader learns at the end that the clock adjustment repeats her father’s habit. That detail adds a personal reason for one of Mara’s actions.

4. “At the reunion I write my married name / on a tag that peels at each corner. / My aunt calls me by the name I left here. / All evening I answer before I turn.” What does the peeling name tag suggest in context?

A. The speaker carries the tag as a permanent keepsake
B. The speaker believes the reunion needs better instructions
C. Relatives repeatedly try to remove the tag
D. The speaker’s displayed identity feels less firmly attached than the name suggests

Correct answer: D. The speaker’s displayed identity feels less firmly attached than the name suggests
The tag displays the speaker’s current name, yet its corners lift. The aunt’s use of another name shows why a label cannot settle which identity feels familiar.

5. “At the reunion I write my married name / on a tag that peels at each corner. / My aunt calls me by the name I left here. / All evening I answer before I turn.” What is the effect of the speaker answering before turning?

A. It implies the speaker is waiting for the aunt to repeat the name
B. It makes the response to the old name seem immediate and habitual
C. It shows the old name brings an unfamiliar person to mind
D. It suggests the speaker has already chosen to replace the name tag

Correct answer: B. It makes the response to the old name seem immediate and habitual
The speaker responds before even turning toward the voice. The sequence signals recognition before any deliberate choice.

6. “At the reunion I write my married name / on a tag that peels at each corner. / My aunt calls me by the name I left here. / All evening I answer before I turn.” Which reading best accounts for both the act of writing the married name and the way the speaker answers the aunt?

A. The speaker carries a current public identity alongside an older identity that still feels familiar
B. The speaker returns mainly to correct relatives who use the older name
C. The speaker intends to conceal a marriage from the family
D. The speaker experiences the old name as a memory without any present force

Correct answer: A. The speaker carries a current public identity alongside an older identity that still feels familiar

Writing the married name and promptly answering to the earlier name are both affirmative actions. Together they show that both names still have a place for the speaker.

7. “IVA: I folded the petition small enough to fit in your pocket. [Ren keeps both hands on the table.] REN: The meeting starts at seven. IVA: Then you have time to read it. [The factory whistle sounds. Neither moves.]” What does Ren keeping both hands on the table communicate that the dialogue leaves unstated?

A. Ren wants Iva to speak more quietly
B. Ren is reaching for the petition at Iva’s request
C. Ren has already read the petition aloud
D. Ren hesitates to accept the petition

Correct answer: D. Ren hesitates to accept the petition

The still hands matter because the folded petition is ready to be taken. Ren answers with a meeting time while making no move to take it.

8. “IVA: I folded the petition small enough to fit in your pocket. [Ren keeps both hands on the table.] REN: The meeting starts at seven. IVA: Then you have time to read it. [The factory whistle sounds. Neither moves.]” What is Iva doing when she replies, “Then you have time to read it”?

A. Withdrawing the request until the next meeting
B. Agreeing that the meeting makes reading impossible
C. Turning Ren’s appeal to the schedule into a reason to act
D. Moving the conversation from the petition to the meeting agenda

Correct answer: C. Turning Ren’s appeal to the schedule into a reason to act

Iva accepts the stated time and uses it to show that Ren need not defer the decision.

9. “IVA: I folded the petition small enough to fit in your pocket. [Ren keeps both hands on the table.] REN: The meeting starts at seven. IVA: Then you have time to read it. [The factory whistle sounds. Neither moves.]” How does the whistle contribute to the end of the scene?

A. It puts an external signal of time next to the characters’ unresolved stillness
B. It announces that Ren has shared the petition
C. It settles the dispute by canceling the meeting
D. It gives the audience a private account of Iva’s intentions

Correct answer: A. It puts an external signal of time next to the characters’ unresolved stillness
The whistle is an audible change outside the conversation. The stage direction then holds both characters still, leaving the disagreement open.

10. “My brother draws a river in chalk / across the yard we have to sell. / By noon two ants have crossed it. / When the rain comes, I stand under the eaves / and watch it reach the street without banks.” What effect does the detail about the ants have before the rain begins?

A. It shows the brother forgot where he drew the river
B. It reveals that the brother built a dam in the yard
C. It establishes that real water has already flooded the drawing
D. It allows the chalk line to function as a river at the scale of small creatures

Correct answer: D. It allows the chalk line to function as a river at the scale of small creatures
The ants can cross the chalk line as though traveling across the drawn landscape. Their scale makes the imagined river briefly convincing.

11. “My brother draws a river in chalk / across the yard we have to sell. / By noon two ants have crossed it. / When the rain comes, I stand under the eaves / and watch it reach the street without banks.” How does “without banks” change the poem’s use of the river image?

A. It introduces a new river unrelated to the drawing in the yard
B. It makes the river follow the original chalk line more precisely
C. The chalk river becomes moving water that exceeds the boundaries of its drawn form
D. It resolves the sale by showing why the yard kept its value

Correct answer: C. The chalk river becomes moving water that exceeds the boundaries of its drawn form
Rain turns the fixed drawing into water reaching the street. Without banks, the water can move beyond what the brother drew.

12. “My brother draws a river in chalk / across the yard we have to sell. / By noon two ants have crossed it. / When the rain comes, I stand under the eaves / and watch it reach the street without banks.” Why is the sale of the yard important to the meaning of the final image?

A. It explains that the speaker drew the line to mark the property boundary
B. It gives the disappearance of the drawing a parallel in the likely loss of the place itself
C. It shows the family decided to sell because of that particular rainstorm
D. It changes the work from a memory into directions for a buyer

Correct answer: B. It gives the disappearance of the drawing a parallel in the likely loss of the place itself

The family has to sell the space where the drawing was made. Watching the water carry the image away gives the reader a second example of something slipping beyond the speaker’s control.

13. “I used to tell our guests that my sister had left the shop without a word. Then one winter I took the bell down from the door to oil it, and her note fell from the brass cup. It was dated the morning she left. I recognized the fold before I read the first line.” What changes when the narrator finds the note?

A. The narrator realizes that the shop bell never rang
B. The narrator gains direct access to every reason the sister left
C. The narrator proves the guests already knew about the note
D. The narrator’s confident account becomes subject to evidence the narrator did not have before

Correct answer: D. The narrator’s confident account becomes subject to evidence the narrator did not have before

The narrator had made an absolute claim about the sister’s silence. The dated note challenges that account without yet revealing all of the sister’s reasons.

14. “I used to tell our guests that my sister had left the shop without a word. Then one winter I took the bell down from the door to oil it, and her note fell from the brass cup. It was dated the morning she left. I recognized the fold before I read the first line.” Why does the passage end before revealing the note’s first line?

A. It shifts attention to how the narrator’s earlier account was constructed from incomplete knowledge
B. It shows that the fold allows the narrator to read the text from outside the paper
C. It confirms the narrator will never open the note
D. It resolves the disagreement by giving the last word to the sister

Correct answer: A. It shifts attention to how the narrator’s earlier account was constructed from incomplete knowledge

The passage lets the discovery unsettle the old story before supplying any new story from the sister. The reader has to reconsider the narrator’s confidence on the evidence already given.

15. “I used to tell our guests that my sister had left the shop without a word. Then one winter I took the bell down from the door to oil it, and her note fell from the brass cup. It was dated the morning she left. I recognized the fold before I read the first line.” Which detail most directly supports a revision of the claim that the sister left “without a word”?

A. The bell was made of brass
B. The guests heard the narrator’s story more than once
C. Her note is dated the morning she left
D. The narrator remembers how the note was folded

Correct answer: C. Her note is dated the morning she left

The dated written note is direct evidence that the sister left a message around the time of departure. The fold helps identify the note, but the date connects it to the claim.