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Question: 1

In the final stanza, the imagery suggests a soldier who lies dying on a battlefield. Which of the following interpretations of lines from the poem reinforce this image?

- I. The final line suggests cannon blasts
- II. "Strains of triumph" imply the dying soldier's joy in victory
- III. The words "defeated, dying" in line 9 indicate mortal combat

- A. I only
- B. I and II
- C. II and III
- D. I and III
- E. II only

Answer: D

Explanation: The question provides you with an interpretation of the poem. Your job is to identify any of the following statements that help support or prove that interpretation. Choice (D), interpretations I and III, is the best choice. Interpretation II suggests that the dying soldier was victorious in battle, but line nine, "as he defeated, dying" contradicts this reading. Interpretations I and II both reinforce the reading of the stanza as a scene from a battle.

Question: 2

What literary device is employed in lines 3 and 4?

Emily Dickinson, "Success is counted sweetest"

Success is counted sweetest By those who ne'er succeed. To comprehend a nectar Requires sorest need. Not one of all the purple Host Who took the Flag today Can tell the definition So clear of Victory As he defeated--dying-- On whose forbidden ear The distant strains of triumph Burst agonized and clear!

- A. Paradox
- B. Caesura
- C. Metaphor
- D. Dramatic monologue
- E. Anaphora

Answer: C

Explanation:

A metaphor is an implied comparison between two things. In the first stanza, Dickinson creates an implicit comparison between success and nectar (the sweet fluid produced by plants); since she does not use "like" or "as," this type of comparison is called a metaphor, as opposed to a simile, which does.

Choice (A), paradox, which means the poem contains contradictory ideas, may be true of the poem as a whole, but metaphor is the best choice for the specific lines three and four because of the implied comparison Dickinson draws between success and nectar. Choice (B), caesura, refers to a pause within the line, but these lines read without pause. Choice (D), dramatic monologue, is a poetic form written in first person in which the speaker is a character in the poem; however, the speaker of Dickinson's poem does not act as a character in the poem. Choice (E), anaphora, is a rhetorical device using repetition, and this poem does not rely heavily on repetition.

Question: 3

9. How many stressed syllables are in each line of the first stanza?

Emily Dickinson, "Success is counted sweetest"

Success is counted sweetest By those who ne'er succeed. To comprehend a nectar Requires sorest need.
Not one of all the purple Host Who took the Flag today Can tell the definition So clear of Victory
As he defeated-dying-- On whose forbidden ear The distant strains of triumph Burst agonized and clear!

- A. 1
- B. 2
- C. 3
- D. 4
- E. 5

Answer: C

Explanation:

3 beats per line, is the best answer. With the syllables stressed, the first stanza reads:

SucCESS is COUNTED SWEEtest By THOSE who NE'ER sucCEED. To COMPreHEND a NECTar ReQUIres SORest NEED.

Note that there are three stressed syllables per line. The poem varies this structure in the second stanza, adding a fourth stressed syllable in the first line, but for the most part, Dickinson's poem is written in iambic trimeter. "Iambic" refers to a pattern of syllables in which every other syllable is stressed. "Trimeter" means there are three beats per line.

Question: 4

10. By what logical pattern is this poem organized?

Emily Dickinson, "Success is counted sweetest"

Success is counted sweetest By those who ne'er succeed. To comprehend a nectar Requires sorest need.
Not one of all the purple Host Who took the Flag today Can tell the definition So clear of Victory
As he defeated--dying-- On whose forbidden ear The distant strains of triumph Burst agonized and clear!

- A. Main idea, developed with examples
- B. Cause and effect
- C. Comparison and contrast
- D. Chronological order
- E. Description

Answer: A

Explanation:

Dickinson states the main argument of the poem in the first line and provides examples in the form of metaphors to develop that idea. Choice (B), cause and effect, is not the main logical organization of the poem, as this method usually involves isolating a main cause and explaining the effects that result from it. Choice (C), comparison and contrast, most often involves pointing out the similarities and differences between two things, which this poem does not do at length. Choice (D), chronological order, involves describing an event from its first to last moments. Dickinson's poem focuses on multiple events and does not tell which happened first or last. Choice (E), description, usually examines the details of a single item or event; this poem, however, does not provide a great deal of detail for detail's sake.

Question: 5

11. Which of the following statements is in keeping with the argument the poem presents? I. The loser understands success better than the victor III. It is best to learn from the mistakes of others

II. It is noble to accept defeat humbly

Emily Dickinson, "Success is counted sweetest"

Success is counted sweetest By those who ne'er succeed. To comprehend a nectar

Requires sorest need.

Not one of all the purple Host

Who took the Flag today Can tell the definition

So clear of Victory

As he defeated-dying--

On whose forbidden ear

The distant strains of triumph Burst agonized and clear!

A. I only

B. I and II

C. II and III

D. II only

E. I, II, and III

Answer: A

Explanation:

Interpretation I provides the best statement of the poem's main argument. The poem provides metaphors to develop the idea that the loser understands success better than the victor. Interpretation II, which claims that one should accept defeat humbly, is pertinent to the topic of failure and may very well be a logical extension of the poem, but it is not the main concern of the poem itself. Interpretation III, which states that it is best to learn from the mistakes of others, is not especially relevant to the poem and is not the best interpretation of its main argument.

Question: 6

12. Which of the following represents the first stanza's rhyme scheme?

Emily Dickinson, "Success is counted sweetest"

Success is counted sweetest By those who ne'er succeed. To comprehend a nectar Requires sorest need.
Not one of all the purple Host Who took the Flag today Can tell the definition So clear of Victory
As he defeated-dying-- On whose forbidden ear The distant strains of triumph Burst agonized and clear!

- A. ABCB
- B. ABAB
- C. AB BB
- D. AB CA
- E. AB CC

Answer: A

Explanation:

The poem's rhyme scheme is choice, ABCB. The last words of each line in the first stanza are: "sweetest," "succeed," "nectar," and "need." Only the second and fourth of these words, "succeed" and "need," rhyme with each other.

Question: 7

What is the rhyme scheme of the first eight lines?

Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Ozymandias"

I met a traveller from an antique land Who said: "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand, Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command Tell that its sculptor well those passions read Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things, The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed. And on the pedestal these words appear: My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings: Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!' Nothing beside remains. Round the decay Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare, The lone and level sands stretch far away."

- A. ABACADAC
- B. ABABACDC
- C. ABABABCB
- D. ABADACDC
- E. ABABCBCB

Answer: B

Explanation:

The rhyme scheme of the first eight lines falls into the following pattern: ABABACDC. The rhyming words are, "land," "stone," "sand," "frown," "command," "read," "things," and "fed."

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