

“Flower Power”

Reading Comprehension – Short Stories

Directions: Read the story. Then answer the questions below.



When her grandmother’s health began to **deteriorate** in the fall of 1994, Mary would make the drive from Washington, DC to Winchester, Va., every few days.

She hated highway driving, finding it ugly and **monotonous**. She preferred to take meandering back roads to her grandmother’s hospital. When she drove through the rocky town of Harpers Ferry, the beauty of the rough waters churning at the intersection of the Shenandoah and Potomac rivers always **captivated** her.

Toward the end of her journey, Mary actually did have to get on highway 81. It was here that she discovered a surprising bit of beauty during one of her trips. Along the median of the highway, there were a long stretch of wildflowers. *They were thin and delicate and purple, almost poetic in appearance.*

The first time she saw the flowers, Mary was seized by an uncontrollable urge to pull over on the highway and yank a bunch from the soil. She carried them into her grandmother’s room when she arrived at the hospital and placed them in a water pitcher by her bed.

For a moment her grandmother seemed more **lucid** than usual. She thanked Mary for the flowers, commented on their beauty and asked where she had gotten them. Mary was overjoyed by the flowers’ seeming ability to wake something up inside her ailing grandmother.

Afterwards, Mary began carrying scissors in the car during her trips to visit grandma. She would quickly glide onto the shoulder, jump out the car, and clip a bunch of flowers. Each time Mary placed the flowers in the pitcher, her grandmother’s eyes would light up and they would have a splendid conversation.

One morning in late October, Mary got a call that her grandmother had taken a turn for the worse. Mary was in such a hurry to get to her grandmother that she sped past her flower spot. She decided to turn around, head several miles back, and cut a bunch.

Mary arrived at the hospital to find her grandmother very weak and unresponsive. She placed the flowers in the pitcher and sat down to hold her grandmother’s hand. She felt a squeeze on her fingers. It was the last conversation they had.

Questions:

1) Which is the best antonym for **deteriorate**?

- A. improve
- B. increase
- C. adjust
- D. accumulate

2) "*She hated highway driving, finding it ugly and **monotonous**.*"

▼ Choose the best way to rewrite the above sentence.

- A. She hated highway driving, finding it ugly and tedious.
- B. She hated highway driving, finding it ugly and confusing.
- C. She hated highway driving, finding it ugly and nerve-racking.
- D. She hated highway driving, finding it ugly and time consuming.

3) What is the best meaning of the word **captivated**?

- A. energized
- B. fascinated
- C. humbled
- D. relaxed

4) "*They were thin and delicate and purple, almost poetic in appearance.*"

▼ Choose the best way to rewrite the above sentence.

- A. *vernacular*, suggesting a particular geographical area
- B. *alliteration*, characterized by the repetition of a letter or sound
- C. *foreshadowing*, characterized by the use of hints to suggest what is to come
- D. *personification*, characterized by a thing being described as if it were human

5) Which best describes what stopping for flowers on the side of the highway became for Mary?

- A. monotonous
- B. a ritual
- C. a regret
- D. torturous

6) What other title would best fit this passage?

- A. "The Fall"
- B. "On the Road"
- C. "Wildflower Poetry"
- D. "Living for Tomorrow"

Questions (continued):

7) Why might the author have described the flowers as poetic?

- A. The author wanted to depict this passage as a poem.
- B. The author wanted to convey that this type of flower had been written about by poets.
- C. The author wanted to contrast the flowers with other flowers considered less beautiful.
- D. The author wanted to convey that Mary felt the flowers were as beautiful as verses on a page.

8) Using the passage as a guide, what kind of person does Mary seem to be?

▼ Check all that are correct.

- A. She is impatient.
- B. She is not the safest driver.
- C. She is drawn to the beauty in nature.
- D. She has a deep love for her grandmother.

9) Which is the best antonym for **lucid**?

- A. false
- B. realistic
- C. obscure
- D. determined

10) What do the flowers seem to come to signify for Mary?

- A. how beautiful the highways can be
- B. an opportunity to pull off on the side of the road
- C. a chance to converse with her grandmother
- D. a chance make the hospital room smell better

Do you have many routines? Do you like routines? Explain.
