

Everett Public Schools Assessment of Student Learning

Student Packet



Benchmark Reading Assessment Grade 9 Grading Period 4

“Yesterday”
“The Blanket”
“Age Distribution”

Student: _____

Date: _____

Teacher: _____

Period: _____

Literary Passage

Directions: Read the following selection and then answer the questions.

Yesterday

by W.S. Merwin

- 1 My friend says I was not a good son
 you understand
 I say yes I understand
- 2 he says I did not go
 to see my parents very often you know
 and I say yes I know
- 3 even when I was living in the same city he says
 maybe I would go there once
 a month or maybe even less
 I say oh yes
- 4 he says the last time I saw my father
 I say the last time I saw my father
- 5 he says the last time I saw my father
 he was asking me about my life
 how I was making out and he
 went into the next room
 to get something to give me
- 6 oh I say
 feeling again the cold
 of my father's hand the last time
- 7 he says and my father turned
 in the doorway and saw me
 look at my wristwatch and he said you know I would like you to stay
 and talk with me
- 8 oh yes I say
- 9 but if you are busy he said
 I don't want you to feel that you
 have to
- 10 just because I'm here
 I say nothing



- 11 he says my father
 said maybe
 you have important work you are doing
- 12 or maybe you should be seeing
 somebody I don't want to keep you
- 13 I look out the window
 my friend is older than I am
 he says and I told my father it was so
 and I got up and left him then
 you know
- 14 though there was nowhere I had to go
 and nothing I had to do

Selection from- "Opening the Hand," by W. S. Merwin, published by Atheneum. Copyright 1983 by W. S. Merwin.
<http://www.poets.org/lit/POEM/wsmerw01.htm>

Benchmark Reading Assessment
Grade 9 – Grading Period 4
“Yesterday”

Fill in the bubble next to the letter of the best answer.

1. Which statement is the most important conclusion the reader can draw from the poem? [LT09]
 - ☐ **A.** The son doesn’t love his father.
 - ☐ **B.** This son is too busy to visit with his father.
 - ☐ **C.** The son regrets not spending more time with his father.
 - ☐ **D.** The son is upset with his father’s demands.

2. Which sentence best summarizes this poem? [LC02]
 - ☐ **A.** A son wants to spend more time with his father.
 - ☐ **B.** A father wants to spend more time with his son.
 - ☐ **C.** A son recalls choosing not to spend time with his father.
 - ☐ **D.** A father and son are struggling over an important issue.

3. Based on the information in the selection, what inference can the reader make about why the son regrets not spending more time with his father? [LC03]
 - ☐ **A.** The son understands that he will not have another opportunity to see his father.
 - ☐ **B.** The son realizes that he was not his father’s top priority.
 - ☐ **C.** The son recognizes that he and his father have little in common.
 - ☐ **D.** The son appreciates his friend more than his father.

4. According to the poem, which word best describes the son? [LA05]
 - ☐ **A.** Insightful
 - ☐ **B.** Anxious
 - ☐ **C.** Gracious
 - ☐ **D.** Insincere

5. What is the theme of the poem? [LC01]

- ☐ A. Good parenting creates responsible children.
- ☐ B. Missed opportunities and lost time result in regret.
- ☐ C. Confiding in a friend can help solve family issues.
- ☐ D. Friendship develops from shared feelings.

6. How does the son's treatment of the father compare to the father's treatment of the son? [LA06]

- ☐ A. Both take the relationship for granted.
- ☐ B. The father is caring while the son is self-centered.
- ☐ C. The father is demanding while the son is self-sacrificing.
- ☐ D. Both are focused on their work and have little time for each other.

7. Why does the son look at his wristwatch? [LA07]

- ☐ A. He was keeping track of time, since he didn't want to be late for an appointment.
- ☐ B. He knew his father was not feeling well and would soon need medication.
- ☐ C. He had been visiting with his father longer than he had anticipated.
- ☐ D. He was uncomfortable visiting his father and wanted to leave.

8. Based on the information in the poem, what generalization can the reader draw about being a child? [LT10]

- ☐ A. Being good means conforming to family expectations.
- ☐ B. Time spent with friends is more important than time spent with family.
- ☐ C. Arguments with family members are difficult to resolve.
- ☐ D. Growing up means becoming independent while maintaining family connections.

9. Which sentence from the poem is an opinion? [LT08]

- ☐ A. "There was nowhere I had to go."
- ☐ B. "My friend says I was not a good son."
- ☐ C. "I got up and left him then you know."
- ☐ D. My father "...saw me look at my wristwatch."

Literary Passage: Autobiography

Directions: Read the following selection and then answer the questions.

The Blanket

by Floyd Dell

- 1 It was a fine September night. A thin white moon rose over the valley. Peter, eleven years old, did not see the moon. He did not feel the cool September breeze blow into the kitchen, for his thoughts were fixed on a red and black blanket on the kitchen table.
- 2 The blanket was a gift from his Dad to his Granddad . . . a going-away gift. They said that Granddad was going away . . . that's what they called it "going away."
- 3 Peter had not really believed his Dad would send Granddad away. But now -- there it was -- the going-away gift. Dad had bought it that very morning. And this was the last evening he and his Granddad would have with each other.
- 4 Together the old man and the young boy washed the supper dishes. Dad had gone out . . . with that woman he was to marry. He would not be back for some time. When the dishes were finished, the old man and the boy went outside and sat under the moon.
- 5 "I'll get my harmonica and play for you," the old man said. "I'll play some of the old tunes."
- 6 But instead of the harmonica, he brought out the blanket. It was a big, double blanket. "Now, isn't that a fine blanket?!" said the old man, smoothing it over his knees. "And isn't your father a kind man to be giving the old man a blanket like this to go away with? It costs something, it looked like it had wool in it! And warm it will be these cold winter nights to come. There will be no other blanket like it up there."
- 7 It was like Granddad to be saying that. He was trying to make it easier. Ever since they had talked about "going away," Granddad had said it was his idea. Imagine -- leaving a warm house and friends to go to that building . . . that government place where he would be with so many other old fellows, having the best of everything. But Peter had not really believed Dad would do it, until this night when he brought home the blanket.
- 8 "Oh, yes, it's a fine blanket," Peter said and got up and went into the house. He wasn't the kind to cry, and besides, he was too old for that. He had just gone in to get Granddad's harmonica.
- 9 The blanket dropped to the floor as the old man took the harmonica. It was the last night they would have together. Neither the old man nor the young boy had to say a word. Granddad played a few notes and then said, "You'll remember this one."
- 10 The thin moon was high overhead and the gentle breeze blew down the valley. The last time, Peter thought. He would never hear Granddad play again. It was fine that Dad was moving to a new house -- away from here. He did not want to sit here outside on fine evenings under a white moon with Granddad gone. The music ended, and the two sat for a few minutes in silence. Then Granddad spoke, "Here is something happier."

- 11 Peter sat and looked out over the valley. Dad would marry that girl. Yes, that girl who had kissed him and who had said she would try to be a good mother to him and all that.
- 12 The tune stopped suddenly and Granddad said, "It's a poor tune, except to be dancing to." And then, "It's a fine girl your father's going to marry. He will feel young again with a pretty wife like that. And what would an old fellow like me do around the house . . . getting in the way . . . an old fool with all the talk about backaches and pains!
- 13 "And then there will be babies coming, and I don't want to be around listening to them cry all hours of the night. No, it's best that I leave. Well, one more tune or two, and then we will get to bed, get some sleep. In the morning, I'll get my new blanket and take my leave. Listen to this. It's a bit of a sad tune but a nice one for a night like this."
- 14 They did not hear the two people coming down the road, Dad and the pretty girl with a hard bright face like a doll. But they heard her laugh and the tune stopped suddenly.
- 15 Dad did not say a word, but the girl walked up to Granddad and said prettily, "I'll not be seeing you in the morning, so I came over to say good-bye."
- 16 "It's kind of you," said Granddad, looking down at the floor; and then seeing the blanket at his feet, he bent down to pick it up. "And will you look at this," he said, sounding himself like a little boy. "Isn't this a fine blanket my son has given me to go away with?"
- 17 "Yes," she said, "it's a fine blanket." She felt the wool again and said, "A fine blanket indeed." She turned to Dad and said to him coldly, "Must have cost a pretty penny."
- 18 Dad cleared his throat . . . "I . . . I wanted him to have the best. . . ."
- 19 The girl stood there, still looking at the blanket. "Mmmm . . . it's a double one, too."
- 20 "Yes," the old man said, "it's a double one . . . a fine blanket for an old fellow to be going away with."
- 21 The boy suddenly walked into the house. He could hear the girl, still talking about the expensive blanket. He heard his Dad get angry in his slow way. And now, she was leaving. As Peter came out, the girl turned and called back, "No matter what you say, he doesn't need a double blanket!" Dad looked at her with a funny look in his eye.
- 22 "She is right, Dad," the boy said. "Granddad doesn't need a double blanket. Here, Dad --" and he held out a pair of scissors -- "Cut it, Dad . . . cut the blanket in two." Both of them looked at the boy surprised. "Cut it in two, I tell you, Dad. And keep the other half."
- 23 "That's not a bad idea," said Granddad gently. "I don't need such a big blanket."
- 24 "Yes," the boy said, "a single blanket is enough for an old man when he's sent away. We'll save the other half, Dad; it will come in useful later."

- 25 "Now what do you mean by that?" asked Dad. "I mean," said the boy slowly, "that I'll give it to you, Dad -- when you're old and I'm sending you away."
- 26 There was a big silence, and then Dad went over to Granddad and stood before him, not saying a word. But Granddad understood, for he put out his hand and laid it on Dad's shoulder. Peter was watching them. And he heard Granddad whisper softly . . . "It's all right, son. I knew you didn't mean it. . . ." And then Peter cried. But it didn't matter because all three were crying together.



Benchmark Reading Assessment
Grade 9 – Grading Period 4
“The Blanket”

Fill in the bubble next to the letter of the best answer.

10. What is the meaning of the word *prettily* in paragraph 15 of the story? [LC04]

- ☐ A. in an amusing way
- ☐ B. in a nice-looking way
- ☐ C. in a charming way
- ☐ D. in an entertaining way

11. Which sentence best summarizes “The Blanket?” [LC02]

- ☐ A. Dad introduces the girl he plans to marry to Peter and Granddad, while presenting the blanket to Granddad as a going-away gift.
- ☐ B. Dad reconsiders marrying the girl, after the girl complains about the cost of the blanket.
- ☐ C. Peter and Granddad argue about cutting the blanket in half, until the girl steps in and stops the argument.
- ☐ D. Granddad receives a blanket as a going-away gift, causing conflict between family members.

12. According to the story, which word best describes the girlfriend? [LA05]

- ☐ A. Sincere
- ☐ B. Conceited
- ☐ C. Insensitive
- ☐ D. Impartial

13. What is the author’s purpose for writing this story? [LT08]

- ☐ A. To inform readers about the elderly.
- ☐ B. To illustrate the effects of poverty on a family.
- ☐ C. To illustrate the value that each generation brings to a family.
- ☐ D. To inform readers about how conflicts are resolved.

14. Which sentence tells how Peter and Granddad are similar? [LA06]

- ☐ **A.** They both are impressed with new family members.
- ☐ **B.** They both are looking forward to changes in their lives.
- ☐ **C.** They both like to play outside and listen to fiddle music.
- ☐ **D.** They both are trying to be brave in the face of change.

15. Based on the information in this story, what conclusion can the reader draw about Granddad? [LT10]

- ☐ **A.** He loves his grandson more than his son.
- ☐ **B.** He is unwilling to make demands on his son.
- ☐ **C.** He is happy to do what his son wishes him to do.
- ☐ **D.** He is selfish by the way he demands his grandson's time.

16. What is the theme of the story? [LC01]

- ☐ **A.** Changes in a family are difficult to accept.
- ☐ **B.** Family members are reliable and trustworthy.
- ☐ **C.** Courage comes from family loyalty.
- ☐ **D.** Families have each others' best interest in mind.

17. What does the author mean when he says, "Dad had gone out . . . with that woman he was to marry," in paragraph 4 of the story? [LC03]

- ☐ **A.** Peter is resentful of the woman for disrupting the family.
- ☐ **B.** Peter is eager to have a new mother in his life.
- ☐ **C.** Peter is nervous about his father's absence.
- ☐ **D.** Peter is looking forward to having more time with his family.

18. What is wrong with the father's reasoning in the story? [LT09]

- ☐ A. He is getting married even though he hasn't known the woman long.
- ☐ B. He tries to make his girlfriend angry by buying the blanket.
- ☐ C. He is getting married even though Grandpa didn't want him to.
- ☐ D. He tries to make up for hurt feelings with a gift.

19. Which sentence explains why Peter will never hear Granddad play his harmonica again? [LA07]

- ☐ A. The three family members are relocating to new and distant housing.
- ☐ B. Granddad's new home permits only adults to visit.
- ☐ C. The girlfriend will not allow Peter to visit Granddad.
- ☐ D. Granddad's aches and pains prevent him from playing the harmonica.

20. Based on the information in the story, what generalization can the reader make about family relationships? [LT10 Extend Thinking]

- ☐ A. It is sometimes difficult to decide on an appropriate gift for a family member.
- ☐ B. It is sometimes difficult to meet the needs of all family members.
- ☐ C. It is sometimes difficult to purchase a new house when there are so many members of a family.
- ☐ D. It is sometimes hard to know how to react when family members are crying.

Informational Passage

Directions: Read the selection and answer the questions.

The Changing United States

- 1 The United States is changing! People are healthier, living longer and working longer than in any other time in our history. Young people are delaying starting families as women and men concentrate on education and careers. These changes have consequences for our country as shown by the 1990 census data in the table below.

Age Distribution

- 2 The first table below shows the projected age distribution of people in the United States as a whole, and in each region of the country in 1995. The information is based on the 1990 census which is an official counting of the people in the country. Each category is shown as a percentage.
- 3 The second table shows the same information, but is a projection of what the population's age distribution will be in the year 2025. These changes are predicted from actual population rates for each year the government has data. The pattern these numbers form is used to make the projection for the future. This prediction shows that there will be a rapid increase in the percentage of elderly citizens by 2025.

Percent Distribution of the Population by Age and Region: 1995 and 2025
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Division, PPL-47, table 4.

Population Distribution in 1995

Region	% of population Under 20 years	% of population 20 to 64 years	% of population 65 years and older
United States	28.8	58.4	12.8
Northeast	26.9	58.9	14.2
Midwest	29.0	57.9	13.1
South	28.8	58.5	12.7
West	30.4	58.3	11.3

Population Distribution in 2025

Region	% of population Under 20 years	% of population 20 to 64 years	% of population 65 years and older
United States	26.8	54.7	18.5
Northeast	25.8	56.0	18.2
Midwest	26.1	54.8	19.1
South	25.3	54.7	20.0
West	29.9	54.0	16.1

- 4 **Youth Population:** Over this 30 year period, the percentage of young people (ages 0 to 19 years) is projected to decrease. In 1995, young people made up 29 percent of the total population. In 2025 this is expected to drop to 27 percent. All regions are expected to have a smaller proportion of people under 20 years of age by then. The West will have the greatest proportion of its population under 20 years of age, followed by the Midwest, and Northeast. The South will have the smallest proportion of youth.
- 5 **Elderly Population.** The Baby Boomer generation are people born between 1946 and 1964. This was an unusually large group because so many people began families after the Second World War. The Baby Boomers will reach retirement age after 2010. Until that happens, the proportion of elderly is expected to increase slightly in all regions. After 2010, the proportion of elderly will increase rapidly. In 1995, Florida had the largest proportion of elderly (19 percent) of any State; Alaska had the smallest at 5 percent. By 2025, Florida (with 26 percent) will still have the largest proportion of its population classified as elderly. Alaska would still rank as the youngest with 10 percent.
- 6 Between 1995 and 2025 the number of elderly are projected to increase in every state, and to double in 21 States. The aging of the Baby Boomer generation will have a great impact in the proportion of the elderly population in this country.



Benchmark Reading Assessment

Grade 9 – Grading Period 4

“The Changing United States”

Fill in the bubble next to the letter of the best answer:

21. What is the main idea in the selection? [IC11]

- ☐ A. The aging of the Baby Boomer generation is increasing the need for health care.
- ☐ B. The population distribution of young people in the United States is growing.
- ☐ C. The population distribution of elderly people in the United States is decreasing.
- ☐ D. The aging of the Baby Boomer generation is changing the population statistics in the United States.

22. What is the meaning of the word *consequences* as it is used in paragraph 1 of the selection? [IC14]

- ☐ A. Penalties
- ☐ B. Concerns
- ☐ C. Costs
- ☐ D. Importance

23. Which sentence summarizes the tables? [IC12]

- ☐ A. The tables provide projected information about the 1995 Population Distribution.
- ☐ B. The tables provide projected information about the 2025 Population Distribution.
- ☐ C. The tables compare the projected percentages of age distribution in the United States over 30 years.
- ☐ D. The tables compare the projected percentages of young people and elderly in the United States every five years.

24. Based on the selection, what inference can the reader make about the impact the Baby Boomer generation had on population distribution in 1960? [IC13]

- ☐ A. They pushed the percentage of middle-aged population higher.
- ☐ B. There would have been no real difference in the population distribution.
- ☐ C. The population over 65 would have been greater than in 1995.
- ☐ D. The percentage of the population under 20 years would have been greater than in 1995 or 2025.

25. What is the meaning of the word *projection* as it is used in paragraph 3 of the selection?
[IC14]

- ☐ A. Statistic
- ☐ B. Prediction
- ☐ C. Information
- ☐ D. Illumination

26. What is the purpose of the tables? [IA15]

- ☐ A. To show critical information about 1995.
- ☐ B. To visually compare statistics from two time periods.
- ☐ C. To distribute information from the U.S. Bureau of the Census.
- ☐ D. To demonstrate the use of graphs for predicting percentage distribution.

27. What is the main difference between the percentage of population from 20 to 64 years of age in 1995 and 2025? [IA16]

- ☐ A. The people in this category are now 30 years older.
- ☐ B. There is no difference, as the ages of the category remain the same.
- ☐ C. There is an increase in the percentage of people in this category.
- ☐ D. There is a decrease in the percentage of people in this category.

28. According to the selection, what happens when the Baby Boomer generation reaches retirement age?
[IA17]

- ☐ A. The proportion of elderly will increase rapidly.
- ☐ B. The proportion of elderly will increase slightly.
- ☐ C. Florida will become last in the percentage of elderly among the states.
- ☐ D. Alaska will become first in the percentage of elderly among the states.

29. Which sentence best describes the author's attitude about the shift in percentage of elderly population in the selection? [IT18]

- ☐ A. The author is pleased with the clarity of the shift between the categories.
- ☐ B. The author is impressed with the survival rate of the Baby Boomer generation.
- ☐ C. The author is neutral as the purpose is to provide factual information clearly.
- ☐ D. The author is apprehensive about the impact of so many elderly on our economy.

30. Based on the information in the selection, what is the most important concept the author presents? [IT19]

- ☐ A. The percentage of young people will remain the same in each region.
- ☐ B. The percentage of elderly people in the United States is projected to increase.
- ☐ C. Alaska and Florida will have identical increases in the percentage of elderly people.
- ☐ D. Alaska and Florida will experience the greatest impact in this population distribution change.