

Grade 8 English First Additional Language Worksheet

Poetry - "Boy on a Swing"

Listening to a poem

Listen to the poem and then answer the questions.

Here is the text of the poem which you will read to the learners:

BOY ON A SWING

Slowly he moves
to and fro, to and fro,
then faster and faster
he swishes up and down.

His blue shirt
billows in the breeze
like a tattered kite.

The world whirls by:
east becomes west,
north turns to south;
the four cardinal points
meet in his head.

Mother!
Where did I come from?
When will I wear long trousers?
Why was my father jailed?

Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali

Questions

- 1.1 Where is the boy and what is he doing? (1)
- 1.2 How do you think he feels about what he is doing? Give a reason for your answer. (2)
2. His blue shirt is described as being "like a tattered kite". Draw a picture of a "tattered kite" to show that you understand what it means. (1)
- 3.1 Write down the three questions the boy asks his mother. (3)
- 3.2 Which question do you think his mother will find the most difficult to answer? Explain. (3)

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4. How do you think the person watching the boy feels about him? Give a reason for your answer. (3)
5. Explain the image of the “cardinal points”. (2)

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Suggested Solutions

- 1.1 The boy is sitting on a swing✓, moving backwards and forwards/ He is swinging. ✓(1)
- 1.2 Any reasonable answer, e.g. he enjoys himself because he moves faster and faster. (2)
2. The picture must be of a kite ✓ that has holes in it. ✓ (1)
- 3.1 The boy asks where he came from, when he will wear long trousers and why his father was jailed. (3)
- 3.2 Any reasonable answer. If there is just a question, no marks. If there is a question, with a reason, give 1 mark for the question and 2 marks for the reason, e.g. The mother might find it difficult to explain where he came from in terms of the biological description. She might be a traditional and conservative person who finds talking about this difficult. OR The mother might not be able to explain to her son why the father was jailed. This involves complex political issues and a lot of pain for the mother and she might not want to talk about it to her son. (3)
4. Any reasonable answer, e.g. The person watching the boy might feel sorry for him. The observer describes the boy swinging and enjoying himself, but then he asks a painful question about his father. The speaker might feel sad that he does not understand what has happened and that he is growing up without his father. (3)
5. North, south, east and west are the cardinal points of the compass. The boy feels lost and the questions are to try to get his bearings, orientate himself. (2)

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