

Reading Comprehension- Poem

Grade 5

Read the poem carefully and answer the questions that follow.

Hope is the thing with feathers

By Emily Dickinson

Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune without the words,
And never stops at all,
And sweetest in the gale is heard;
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little bird
That kept so many warm.
I've heard it in the chillest land,
And on the strangest sea;
Yet, never, in extremity,
It asked a crumb of me.

Comprehension Questions (10 points)

1. What does Emily Dickinson compare hope to in this poem?
2. Where does this "thing with feathers" perch?
3. When does the bird's song sound the sweetest?
4. According to the poem, what would it take to silence hope?
5. What does the poet mean by saying the bird "kept so many warm"?
6. In which places has the poet heard this bird's song?
7. What does the poet mean by saying that hope "never asked a crumb of me"?

Vocabulary Questions (5 points)

8. Find a word in the poem that means "to make someone feel embarrassed or ashamed."
9. What does "gale" mean in this poem?
10. What does "extremity" refer to in the poem?
11. The poem uses the word "sore" in an unusual way. What does "sore must be the storm" mean?
12. Find a synonym for "strangest" from the poem.

Grammar Questions (5 points)

13. Identify the metaphor in the first line of the poem.
14. In the line "And sings the tune without the words," identify the subject and verb.
15. In the line "That could abash the little bird," what part of speech is "abash"?
16. In the final stanza, find an example of alliteration.
17. The poem uses semicolons (;) to connect ideas. Find one example and explain how it connects two related thoughts.

Answer Key

Comprehension Answers

1. Hope is compared to a bird (or "thing with feathers").
2. It perches in the soul.
3. The bird's song sounds sweetest during a gale or storm.
4. It would take a very severe storm to silence hope.
5. The poet means that hope provides comfort and courage to many people during difficult times.
6. The poet has heard hope in "the chilliest land" and "on the strangest sea" (in the coldest, most barren places and in the most unfamiliar situations).
7. It means that hope gives freely without asking for anything in return; hope sustains us without demanding payment.

Vocabulary Answers

8. Abash
9. A strong wind or storm
10. Extremity refers to extreme conditions, difficult situations, or desperate circumstances
11. It means the storm would have to be very powerful or severe
12. "Chillest" could be considered a synonym for "strangest" (both describe extreme conditions)

Grammar Answers

13. "Hope is the thing with feathers" is a metaphor comparing hope to a bird
14. Subject: it (referring to "the thing with feathers"); Verb: sings
15. "Abash" is a verb
16. "Strangest sea" contains alliteration with the repeated 's' sound
17. Example: "And sweetest in the gale is heard; And sore must be the storm" - the semicolon connects the idea that hope sounds sweetest during difficult times with the idea that it would take an extremely severe situation to silence hope.