Icarus’s Flight

Multiple Choice
Identify the choice that best completes the statement or answers the question.

Comprehension
Read each of the following questions. Then choose the letter of the best answer.

____ 1. What is most unusual about the structure of the poem?
   A It does not have a consistent rhyme scheme.
   B It is organized into five stanzas.
   C Capitalization and punctuation are missing.
   D Sentences extend from one stanza into the next.

____ 2. In the first line, the poet asks, “What else could the boy have done?” What answer is the poet expecting?
   A He could have flown lower.
   B He could have flown farther.
   C There is nothing else he could have done.
   D He could have stayed in the garden.

____ 3. What does the poet mean by “the exact point where freedom stopped” (lines 4–5)?
   A the point at which Icarus could no longer fly.
   B the point at which Icarus decided to fly.
   C the point at which Icarus plunged into the sea.
   D the point at which the shepherd and farmer could no longer see him.

____ 4. What does the poet mean by “his anticipated plummeting” (line 7)?
   A Icarus knew that he would eventually fall.
   B Icarus was surprised by his fall.
   C Icarus regretted trying to fly.
   D Icarus knew that people were watching him.

____ 5. What is the best statement of the poem’s theme or message?
   A Test your limits to learn what’s possible.
   B Practice moderation in all things.
   C Be content with what you have.
   D Work hard to prepare for the future.

____ 6. What language device or structure does the poet use to communicate his message?
   A sentence fragments
   B rhyme and repetition
   C comparison and contrast
   D question-and-answer
7. What does the poet suggest by the lines “to flutter ignorantly / from petal to petal within some garden” (lines 12–13)?

A  a busy, fulfilled life  
B  a dull, boring life  
C  a life of peace and harmony  
D  a life of freedom and escape

8. Which phrase from the poem best expresses what Icarus gained from his flight?

A  “downward plunge”  
B  “point of wisdom”  
C  “just far enough”  
D  “upward escape”

9. Which word best describes the poet’s attitude toward Icarus?

A  critical  
B  dismissive  
C  admiring  
D  questioning

10. What is the “cushion” referred to in line 20?

A  the sea into which Icarus fell.  
B  the wings that disintegrated as Icarus fell.  
C  the disappointment Icarus felt when he fell.  
D  the knowledge Icarus gained from his flight.

Short Answer

Written Response
Answer the following questions based on your knowledge of the poem.

1. What is meant by the lines, “He flew just far enough. He flew precisely / to the point of wisdom”?

2. Unlike many retellings of the myth of Icarus, this poem suggests that Icarus did the right thing. Explain why, citing evidence from the poem.
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Answer Section

MULTIPLE CHOICE

1. ANS: D  PTS:  8
2. ANS: C  PTS:  8
3. ANS: A  PTS:  8
4. ANS: A  PTS:  8
5. ANS: A  PTS:  8
6. ANS: D  PTS:  8
7. ANS: B  PTS:  8
8. ANS: B  PTS:  8
9. ANS: C  PTS:  8
10. ANS: D  PTS:  8

SHORT ANSWER

1. ANS:
The lines mean that Icarus flew just to the point when he could not go any farther. At that point, he understood how much he was capable of.

PTS:  10

2. ANS:
The poet suggests that it was better for Icarus to test his limits and learn what he was capable of rather than to spend his life in ignorance. Supporting evidence includes, "What else could the boy have done?" (line 1); "He flew just far enough" (line 10); "Would it / have been better to flutter ignorantly" (lines 11–12); "He now had his answer" (line 18).

PTS:  10