“The Invalid’s Story” by Mark Twain

Selection Test A

Critical Reading Identify the letter of the choice that best answers the question.

__ 1. Which of the following is the setting for “The Invalid’s Story”?
   A. a restaurant in Cleveland, Ohio
   B. a farmhouse in a small Wisconsin town
   C. a train from Cleveland to Wisconsin
   D. a lakeside park in Chicago

__ 2. Who is the invalid referred to in the story’s title, “The Invalid’s Story”?
   A. the narrator
   B. Thompson, the expressman
   C. the narrator’s friend
   D. a stranger on the train

__ 3. The plot of “The Invalid’s Story” centers on confusion about
   A. how long the narrator’s friend has been dead.
   B. what is in the long white-pine box.
   C. what is in the stranger’s bag.
   D. how the narrator lost his health.

__ 4. What literary element does this passage from “The Invalid’s Story” illustrate?
   “Pfew! I reckon it ain’t no cinnamon’t I’ve loaded up thish-year stove with!”
   A. simile
   B. symbol
   C. flashback
   D. dialect

__ 5. In “The Invalid’s Story,” Mark Twain uses dialect
   A. only at the beginning and at the end.
   B. in the narrator’s comments.
   C. in Deacon Hackett’s dialogue.
   D. in Thompson’s dialogue.

__ 6. In “The Invalid’s Story,” which word best describes how the narrator feels when
   he begins to smell the foul odor in the railroad car?
   A. curious
   B. embarrassed
   C. angry
   D. amused
7. In “The Invalid’s Story,” Thompson gives a long speech about the fact that death is inevitable for all human beings. Why do you think Twain includes this long speech?
   A. It shows that Thompson is a brilliant philosopher.
   B. It adds humor because it is filled with repetition and clichés.
   C. It shows that Thompson sharply disagrees with the narrator.
   D. It emphasizes the characters’ sense of pleasant relaxation on their trip.

8. An idiom is a phrase or expression not meant to be taken literally. Dialects are often rich in idioms. Read the following excerpt from “The Invalid’s Story.”
   “Well-a-well, we’ve all got to go, they ain’t no getting around it.”
Which of the following best expresses the meaning of the underlined words?
   A. There is no point in going around in circles.
   B. There are ways to avoid it.
   C. There is no way to avoid it.
   D. Jumping over it is easy for some people.

9. Visualizing the action in this passage from “The Invalid’s Story” allows you to appreciate which literary element at this point in the story?
   We went in again after we were frozen pretty stiff; but my, we couldn’t stay in, now. So we just waltzed back and forth, freezing and thawing, and stifling, by turns.
   A. foreshadowing
   B. metaphor
   C. dialogue
   D. humor

10. In “The Invalid’s Story,” why do the two men light up cigars?
    A. The cigars were a present to the narrator from the dead man.
    B. The men want to “modify” the unpleasant odor in the expressman’s car.
    C. The men are trying to keep warm and think smoking might help.
    D. The engineer has requested that the men smoke cigars.

11. Visualize the action in this passage from Twain’s story. What is the cause of the action?
    He gagged and gasped, and floundered up and made a break for the door, pawing the air and saying hoarsely, “Don’t hender me!—gimme the road! I’m a dying; gimme the road!”
    A. Thompson probably has a bad case of food poisoning.
    B. Thompson is a person who likes to exaggerate whatever he is feeling.
    C. The smell in the railroad car is becoming increasingly unbearable.
    D. The railroad car has finally reached its destination.
12. The narrator of “The Invalid’s Story” says that “the news was too late to save me; imagination had done its work, and my health was permanently shattered.” According to the narrator, what has caused the permanent breakdown in his health?
   A. imagination  
   B. overwork  
   C. infection  
   D. ambition

**Vocabulary and Grammar**

13. What is the best synonym for *prodigious* as it is used in this sentence?
   The fact is that without my suspecting it a prodigious mistake had been made.
   A. modest  
   B. tiny  
   C. huge  
   D. rebellious

14. Which word is most nearly opposite in meaning to *judicious* in this sentence?
   It seemed judicious to enlarge the facts to fit the probabilities.
   A. silent  
   B. unreasonable  
   C. abundant  
   D. miraculous

15. Which of these does the complete predicate of a sentence always contain?
   A. an adverb  
   B. the subject  
   C. the verb  
   D. a prepositional phrase

**Essay**

16. In an essay, describe how Twain uses images of smell in “The Invalid’s Story” to create the story’s humor. Mention one specific example from the story.

17. Dialect is a way of speaking that is common to people of a particular region or group. In an essay, discuss Mark Twain’s use of dialect in “The Invalid’s Story.” Where, specifically, does Twain use dialect in the story? How does dialect add to the story’s vivid setting and its humor?