

9th grade Literature Diagnostic Test

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

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I. DIRECTIONS: Read each passage. Then answer each question by choosing the best answer. (15 pts.)

The Bread Lesson

My dad has watermelon-size biceps, a neck like an inner tube, and enormous, muscular hands that make him seem like he's always wearing baseball mitts. He doesn't seem like the kind of guy who would bake great bread, but he is and he does. Every Saturday he puts on his chef's apron, rolls up his sleeves, breaks out a bag of flour, and produces two loaves of homemade bread. When he's done, the whole house smells delicious, and I can't wait for a hot slice smothered with yellow, melting butter.

The rest of the week, Dad is a car mechanic, which involves lots of heavy lifting, tightening, unscrewing, shoving, shaking, yanking, and banging. People tend to think of their cars as metallic members of the family, so there's lots of pressure on Dad to make sure pumps pump, steering steers, and brakes brake. The shop where Dad works is understaffed, so he's under a lot of stress. Sometimes I worry he's going to overheat and blow a gasket or something, like some old car. I think Dad began baking bread to help him relax. I see him in the kitchen, working on a spongy hunk of dough—punching and pounding it into submission.

I've been feeling kind of stressed out myself since I found out I didn't qualify for the swim team. Now I'll have to wait a whole year to try out again; that might as well be a million years. Plus, I'm taking some tough classes this year, and my best friend moved away.

I think Dad knew I was feeling pressure. He sat next to me on the sofa last Saturday and asked me how things were going. I said OK, even though I didn't feel OK at all. He looked at me for a moment, then he said it was time for me to help. He got up from the sofa and headed to the kitchen.

5 I couldn't imagine what help I could offer. Still, I followed right behind him. Once we were standing by the counter, Dad gave me one of his old aprons. He slipped it on over my head and tied it in the back with such obvious pride that you'd think I was being knighted, which felt kind of silly but also kind of nice. I was being initiated as a bread-baker.

Next, Dad got out his enormous stainless-steel mixing bowl, handed me a large wooden spoon, and told me to stir while he added the ingredients. He threw in a large handful of flour from a sack. A haze of flour dust began to hover in the air like fog. He then sprinkled salt into the bowl. Dad isn't big on measuring. He instinctively knows exactly how much of each ingredient to use, and the bread always turns out great. The entire operation was accomplished as if we were part of a NASA space launch. Flour? Check. Yeast? Check. Milk? Check. Sugar, shortening, and salt? Check, check, check.

When I had stirred the flour and milk mixture into a thick, gooey lump, Dad had me turn it over onto the countertop, which had been dusted with flour. Then he showed me how to knead the dough—repeatedly pushing away at the rubbery glob, stretching it out, pounding it, and folding it in on itself. As I kneaded it, I felt the dough come to life beneath my hands. It took ten minutes and a surprising amount of energy to corral the unruly blob into a neat, round mass.

8 Next came the most difficult and surprising part—doing nothing. We put the dough back into the metal bowl. Then we waited for more than an hour for the dough to slowly swell up and double in size. Next, we **deflated** the risen dough by punching it down. We divided it in two and waited for it to rise again. Afterward, we put the dough into pans and waited another hour for the dough to rise and double one last time. Dad said the waiting is always the hardest part because of the sharp, sweet smell coming from the yeast. "It's hard to resist putting the dough directly into the oven, but if you do, the loaves will be small, and the bread will be tough. The most important lesson of all is learning to be

patient," Dad explained.

While we waited, we sat and talked. Silence is a blank space that begs to be filled. It's like the dough—it swells up and fills a room with emptiness unless you punch it down with words. It felt good to be still and listen to each other. It felt good to open up and share our thoughts. As the flour dust in the kitchen quietly settled, time seemed to slow down. The dough was going to rise at its own pace. We could do nothing to make it rise faster. As I accepted that, I stopped watching the clock and drumming my fingers on the tabletop. I started enjoying the quiet time with Dad. My father taught me how to bake bread, but I think I learned something more. I learned to appreciate the slowly ticking rhythm of time. I learned to relax and let the bread rise.

1. Why is the narrator feeling stressed?
 - A. The narrator does not want to move away.
 - B. The narrator dislikes baking bread with father.
 - C. The narrator does not make the swim team.
 - D. The narrator has never made bread.

2. What is the meaning of the phrase, "you'd think I was being knighted" in paragraph 5?
 - A. It was a chance to do something with Dad after work.
 - B. It was an opportunity to improve my bread-baking skills.
 - C. It was exciting to use the new stainless steel mixing bowl.
 - D. It was an honor to be included in my father's baking activities.

3. The word **deflated** is used in paragraph 8. Which word is the antonym of **deflated**?
 - A. Contracted.
 - B. Expanded.
 - C. Collapsed.
 - D. Swerved.

4. What type of figurative language is found in the sentence, "silence is a blank space that begs to be filled"?
 - A. Irony.
 - B. Simile.
 - C. Metaphor.
 - D. Hyperbole.

5. What does the author suggest would fill the emptiness of blank space?
 - A. Baking.
 - B. Talking.
 - C. Drumming.
 - D. Working.

6. What is the theme of the story?
 - A. It is important to find ways to relax.
 - B. It is important to know how to bake bread.
 - C. It is difficult to relax in times of stress.
 - D. It is difficult to enjoy time with family.

7. What organizational pattern is used in the story?

- A. Spatial.
- B. Sequential.
- C. Compare/contrast.
- D. fact/opinion.

Adventurous Storyteller

Jack London, one of America's major writers of adventure tales, was born in California in 1876. During his life, London worked at many jobs. His broad life experiences would become the background for his writing.

London loved to read. As a teenager, he spent many hours educating himself at the Oakland, California, public library. He attended college at the University of California at Berkeley, but he stayed for only six months. He thought Berkeley was "not lively enough" and wanted to do something more exciting.

London wrote stories about working people and the hard times they had making a living. He knew their problems first hand. He worked as a sailor, rancher, factory employee, railroad hobo, and gold prospector, to name just a few of his many jobs.

London grew up near the waterfront in Oakland. He loved the water. When he was fifteen years old, he bought a small sailboat called a sloop. Later he sailed to Japan on a schooner, which is a much larger sailing boat.

Like many people of the time, London caught the Klondike Gold Rush Fever. In 1897, he headed for Alaska. He didn't find gold, but he discovered something even more valuable. He discovered that people enjoyed listening to the stories he made up with his vivid imagination. London entertained the miners with story after story. Later, using his experiences during the Gold Rush, he created many more colorful stories.

London resolved to live a full, exciting life. He once said, "I would rather be a superb meteor, every atom of me in magnificent glow, than a sleepy and permanent planet." Each day, he pushed himself. Once London determined that he was going to be a writer, nothing could stop him. His goal was to write at least one thousand words every day. He refused to stop even when he was sick. In eighteen years, the writer published fifty-one books and hundreds of articles. He was the best-selling and highest-paid author of his day. Many people also considered him to be the best writer.

White Fang and *The Call of the Wild* are his most famous stories and are about surviving in the Alaskan wilderness. Readers can enjoy Jack London's energy and his talent for telling wonderful stories each time they open one of his novels.

Jack London Timeline

| | |
|------|--|
| 1876 | Born in San Francisco, California |
| 1887 | Buys a sloop and learns to sail |
| 1897 | Takes part in the Klondike Gold Rush |
| 1899 | Gets magazine assignments from Overland Monthly and Atlantic Monthly |
| 1903 | Publishes "Call of the Wild" |
| 1904 | Publishes "The Sea Wolf" |
| 1905 | Purchases 1,400 acres known as Beauty Ranch |

8. Why was Jack London able to write on many topics?

- A. He had a variety of experiences and jobs.
- B. He was drawn to the Klondike Gold Rush.
- C. He pushed himself to reach goals.
- D. He was the best-selling and highest-paid author.

9. Why did Jack London not complete college?

- A. He traveled to Alaska in 1897.
- B. He was hired to sail to Japan.
- C. He spent much of his time writing.
- D. He was not interested enough.

10. What do a sloop and schooner have in common?

- A. They were both built in Japan.
- B. They were both owned by Jack London.
- C. They are both types of watercraft.
- D. They were both made in the early 1900s.

11. When did Jack London discover he first had a talent for storytelling?

- A. When he went to college.
- B. When he went to Alaska.
- C. When he was a teenager.
- D. When he worked as a sailor.

12. Which word best describes Jack London?

- A. Cautious.
- B. Unfocused.
- C. Imaginative.
- D. Compassionate.

13. What is the author's purpose in writing the passage?

- A. Identify books written by jack London
- B. Provide information on jack London's life
- C. Support the statement that London was the "best writer"
- D. Describe life during the Klondike .

14. When did Jack Landon purchase 1,400 acres known as Beauty Ranch

- A. In 1899
- B. In 1900
- C. In 1904
- D. In 1905

15. Where was Jack Landon born?

- A. In England
- B. In Canada
- C. In Australia
- D. In U.S.A.