

The Peace of Wild Things Formative Assessment #1

Directions: Read the Theodore Roethke's poem, "Root Cellar" below and then answer the questions that follow. Remember what you have learned about showing vs. telling.

Root Cellar

Nothing would sleep in that cellar, dank as a ditch,
Bulbs broke out of boxes hunting for chinks in the dark,
Shoots dangled and drooped,
Looking obscenely from mildewed crates,
Hung down long yellow evil necks, like tropical snakes.
And what a congress of stinks!—
Roots ripe as old bait,
Pulpy stems, rank, silo-rich,
Leaf-mold, manure, lime, piled against slippery planks.
Nothing would give up life:
Even the dirt kept breathing a small breath.

- Theodore Roethke

1. Which of the following is the best example of showing or imagery?

A. "Nothing would sleep in that cellar"
B. "Pulpy stems, rank, silo-rich"
C. "Nothing would give up life:"
D. All of the above

B is the best example of showing or imagery because it appeals to readers' senses of smell and touch. A and D tell.

2. Which of the following is the best example of telling?

A. "Shoots dangled and drooped,"
B. "Hung down long yellow evil necks, like tropical snakes"
C. "Roots ripe as old bait"
D. "Nothing would give up life:"

D is the best example of telling. A, B, and C contain imagery that appeals to readers' senses of sight and smell.

3. If you had to choose **one line** that best reveals Roethke's intended meaning for this poem, which of the following lines would you choose?

A. "Bulbs broke out of boxes hunting for chinks in the dark,"
B. "And what a congress of stinks!—"
C. "Nothing would give up life:"
D. "Even the dirt kept breathing a small breath."

C best identifies the intended meaning of the entire poem. Some students may understandably choose D. The final line, however, provides a strong image that supports the previous line.

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4. Write the line from #3 above. This is the line that best reveals the poem's intended meaning:

"Nothing would give up life:"

Now, using this line as the **meaning** (the main idea) of the poem, provide 2 strong lines (or parts or parts of lines) that contain imagery (showing) that supports or leads readers to this idea:

Possible choices for supporting imagery:

- Nothing would sleep in that cellar, dank as a ditch,
- Bulbs broke out of boxes hunting for chinks in the dark,
- Shoots dangled and drooped,
- Looking obscenely from mildewed crates,
- Hung down long yellow evil necks, like tropical snakes.
- Roots ripe as old bait,
- Pulpy stems, rank, silo-rich,
- Leaf-mold, manure, lime, piled against slippery planks.
- Even the dirt kept breathing a small breath.