

1. ANS: D

Notes on this selection: “Lady with a Falcon”

In the book *Selected Letters, 1955-1995* by Susan Sherman, the letter to Louise Bogan written on March 10th 1955 by May Sarton states:

Do you know the Mediaeval depart. at the Met which this poem is about?

The lady has the most brooding hooded face—the whole thing is a masterpiece of understatement and very troubling.”

Keep this comment in mind when you tackle the poem’s question.

1. The first question was answered correctly by only 31%, the hardest question in this selection because it asks for the thematic understanding that the speaker convey’s the Lady in the tapestry as troubled by the falcon’s loss of liberty, choice D. If that one understanding is correctly read, then all the other questions are easier to answer because they hinge from this theme. The poem is not about the falcon, it’s about the Lady. Choices A, B, and C are not validated anywhere in the poem because the speaker does not talk about the falcon’s appearance or being enchanted by the falcon’s gracefulness. Choice E is a good distracter because the bird is captured as she is captured which could be misread as a symbol. A symbol represents something else more complex—an idea or interrelated ideas—as a flag symbolizes patriotism. In this poem the falcon simply does not mean or symbolize liberty; the bird has lost his liberty as the lady has lost her liberty.

PTS: 1 DIF: Hard MSC: 31% answered correctly

NOT: 1991 #30

2. ANS: C

2. This question follows logically because the situation is being compared not the bird. The falcon has lost his liberty as the lady has lost her liberty, choice C. The speaker does not mention gentleness or ferocity anywhere in the poem, choice A. In choice B, the speaker is objectively observing as you would a snapshot. The tapestry tells its own story, not commenting on the intention of the lady. Talons and wrist would make a difficult comparison instead of talons and fingers, choice D. In choice E, the lady is not a hunter of the hare; the hunter would be the falcon.

PTS: 1 DIF: Easy MSC: 66% answered correctly

NOT: 1991 #31

3. ANS: E

3. This definition question asks for the identification of a figure of speech, the apostrophe. This is a quick recognition question at the easiest level of Bloom’s taxonomy. However, only 51% had the correct answer, E. In line 13, the speaker addresses the lady as if she were present and capable of understanding and responding which is the standard definition of this device. Lines 1, 3, 6, and 11 or choices A, B, C, and D do not address any object or person. To teach this device, have the students look for the tattletale comma which must set off the noun of address.

PTS: 1 DIF: Medium MSC: 51% answered correctly

NOT: 1991 #32

4. ANS: C

4. This question, asks for the identification of “The captured hunter.” It had the best response of 89% correct. This question has students narrow down quickly to lady, choice A or falcon, choice C. All but 11% chose correctly falcon. The Lady’s lover, poet, and prey, choices B, D or E. did not distract the students from who is actually captured in the poem.

PTS: 1 DIF: Easy MSC: 89% answered correctly
NOT: 1991 #33

5. ANS: A

5. Choice A is correct because the falcon is ironically a threat to the lady by reminding her of her lost freedom, choice A, especially because the falcon is tethered to her wrist and hooded so it can’t see. The speaker does comprehend the position of both the falcon and the lady, eliminating choice C; the lady is not in awe of the falcon, B; the falcon is not the prey (the hare still is the prey), D; the lady is not controlling her thoughts in this tapestry because we, as the audience, don’t know what her thoughts are, only the speaker’s, E.

PTS: 1 DIF: Easy MSC: 73% answered correctly
NOT: 1991 #34

6. ANS: C

6. This is the second time the students are directed to line 13, “Lady, your falcon is a peril.” Peril means danger or threat and the speaker is addressing her that she is in danger because she is like the falcon reminding her of her loss of freedom, choice C. The speaker says in line 12, “it is she who seems hooded,” like the falcon but she is not literally hooded in the verse. Lines 5, 11, 15, and 17 (choices A, B, D, and E) describe characteristics of the falcon but do not identify the metaphoric meaning of falcon which is the only rhetorical shift in the poem. It changes the focus from the bird to the lady.

PTS: 1 DIF: Medium MSC: 56% answered correctly
NOT: 1991 #35

7. ANS: D

7. Line 6 says “Pounces upon her [lady’s] inward air,” and line 20 says “Plummets into your [lady’s] inmost heart.” The only choice that reflects the internal nature of the lady is line 16, “The captured hunter hunts your mind,” suggesting the same reflection of why the lady is similar to the falcon, choice D. Lines 5, 8, 12, and 18 all describe the bird in one feature of the bird’s descriptive training. Line 5, choice A, the contained flight of the falcon; line 8 the falcon bloodies the hare; line 12 suggests she is as hooded as the bird, not seeing; and line 18 shows that the falcon is tied to her wrist.

PTS: 1 DIF: Easy MSC: 79% answered correctly
NOT: 1991 # 36

8. ANS: D

8. The final stanza begins “Better to starve the senseless wind\ Than wrist a falcon’s stop and start:” with the colon indicating that the clause reiterates or repeats the same message in the other four stanzas, except this time the speaker is no longer observing. The tone shifts from detached or neutral to admonition, choice D, with this reproaching or scolding language: “The bolt of flight you thought to bend/ Plummets into your inmost heart.” The lady cannot bend or change the course of tethered existence which causes her to experience a sudden unexpected melancholy or recognition of the speaker’s (line 10) reason for the brooding hooded face. The speaker does not plea or wish with or for the lady, choices A and B. He does not give her an ultimatum nor anticipate a change, choices E and C. The tapestry tells its story and the speaker comments on his observations of that story in the last stanza from the scene so carefully stitched.

PTS: 1 DIF: Medium MSC: 47% answered correctly
NOT: 1991 #37

9. ANS: C

9. When a question asks for the “basic” meter, typically the poet has variations in lines. Several lines have to be scanned in each stanza to identify correctly the dominate meter, tetrameter, choice C. None of the lines only have two feet, eliminating choice A. Line five, however, has more than four measures based upon the syllables, causing students to think that choices D or E could be possible. Most lines have 4 measures of iambic meter which repeats several times in other stanzas making is the basic meter of the verse. Choices A and B are not correct because none of the lines have only two or three measures.

PTS: 1 DIF: Medium MSC: 50% answered correctly
NOT: 1991 #38