

GUIDED PRACTICE AND STRATEGIES TEST

DIRECTIONS

Read the selections. Then answer the questions that follow.

Carrying the Running-Aways

by Virginia Hamilton

- 1 Never had any idea of carryin' the runnin'-away slaves over the river. Even though I was right there on the plantation, right by that big river, it never got in my mind to do somethin' like that. But one night the woman whose house I had gone courtin' to said she knew a pretty girl wanted to cross the river and would I take her. Well, I met the girl and she was awful pretty. And soon the woman was tellin' me how to get across, how to go, and when to leave.
- 2 Well, I had to think about it. But each day, that girl or the woman would come around, ask me would I row the girl across the river to a place called Ripley. Well, I finally said I would. And one night I went over to the woman's house. My owner trusted me and let me come and go as I pleased, long as I didn't try to read or write anythin'. For writin' and readin' was forbidden to slaves.
- 3 Now, I had heard about the other side of the river from other slaves. But I thought it was just like the side where we lived on the plantation. I thought there were slaves and masters over there, too, and overseers and rawhide whips they used on us. That's why I was so scared. I thought I'd land the girl over there and some overseer didn't know us and would beat us for bein' out at night. They could do that, you know.
- 4 Well, I did it. Oh, it was a long rowin' time in the cold, with me worryin'. But pretty soon I see a light way up high. Then I remembered the woman told me to watch for a light. Told me to row to the light, which is what I did. And when I got to it, there were two men. They reached down and grabbed the girl. Then one of the men took me by the arm. Said, "You about hungry?" And if he hadn't been holdin' me, I would of fell out of that rowboat.
- 5 Well, that was my first trip. I was scared for a long time after that. But pretty soon I got over it, as other folks asked me to take them across the river. Two and three at a time, I'd take them. I got used to makin' three or four trips every month.

STRATEGY Style
Sometimes a writer will use different styles, such as a specific dialect. Using a dialect makes the text sound just as it would if the narrator (or character) was speaking out loud. As you read this text, pause where you think the speaker would pause. Read it slowly and think about what the character is saying

STRATEGY Style
This phrase is addressed directly at you, the reader. The writer wants to make a connection with the reader. Think about what stylistic features help the writer accomplish this. Remember that style includes word choice, types of sentences, and even grammatical structures.

GUIDED PRACTICE AND STRATEGIES TEST *CONTINUED*

6 Now it was funny. I never saw my passengers after that first girl. Because I took them on the nights when the moon was not showin', it was cloudy. And I always met them in the open or in a house with no light. So I never saw them, couldn't recognize them, and couldn't describe them. But I would say to them, "What you say?" And they would say the password. Sounded like "Menare." Seemed the word came from the Bible somewhere, but I don't know. And they would have to say that word before I took them across.

7 Well, there in Ripley was a man named Mr. Rankins; the rest was John, I think. He had a "station" there for escaping slaves. Ohio was a free state, I found out, so once they got across, Mr. Rankins would see to them. We went at night so we could continue back for more and to be sure no slave catchers would follow us there.

8 Mr. Rankins had a big light about thirty feet high up, and it burned all night. It meant freedom for slaves if they could get to that bright flame.

9 I worked hard and almost got caught. I'd been rowin' fugitives for almost four years. It was in 1863, and it was a night I carried twelve runnin'-aways across the river to Mr. Rankins's. I stepped out of the boat back in Kentucky, and they were after me. Don't know how they found out. But the slave catchers, didn't know them, were on my trail. I ran away from the plantation and all I knew there. I lived in the fields and in the woods. Even in caves. Sometimes I slept up in the tree branches. Or in a hay pile. I couldn't get across the river now, it was watched so closely.

10 Finally, I did get across. Late one night me and my wife went. I had gone back to the plantation to get her. Mr. Rankins had him a bell by this time, along with the light. We were rowin' and rowin'. We could see the light and hear that bell, but it seemed we weren't getting' any closer. It took forever, it seemed. That was because we were so scared and it was so dark and we knew we could get caught and never get gone.

11 Well, we did get there. We pulled up there and went on to freedom. It was only a few months before all the slaves was freed.

STRATEGY

Summarize One way to be sure you understand, and remember, important details in a story, is to summarize what you've read. Here, the narrator explains how he hid from the slave catchers. In your head, summarize his actions.

STRATEGY

Setting The setting of a story is where and when it takes place. In 1865, the Thirteenth Amendment made slavery illegal in the entire United States. All slaves were now free. The man and his wife ran away shortly before this.

GUIDED PRACTICE AND STRATEGIES TEST *CONTINUED*

- 12 We didn't stay on at Ripley. We went on to Detroit, because I wasn't takin' any chances. I have children and grandchildren now. Well, you know, the bigger ones don't care so much to hear about those times. But the little ones, well, they never get tired of hearin' how their grandpa brought emancipation¹ to loads of slaves he could touch and feel in the dark but never ever see.

"Carrying the Running-Aways," from *The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales*, told by Virginia Hamilton. Text copyright © 1985 by Virginia Hamilton. Reprinted by permission of Random House, Inc.

¹ emancipation: freedom.

Use "Carrying the Running-Aways" (pp. 49–51) to answer questions 1–12.

- 1 How did the narrator end up getting involved in helping runaway slaves?
- A He was always involved in the Underground Railroad because his family had been involved, too.
 - B He was dating a girl who needed help running away.
 - C He wanted to run away himself; but needed to help others first.
 - D He met someone who asked him if he would help a young enslaved girl to cross the river.
- 2 What is most likely the reason that the narrator took several days to make up his mind?
- F He did not believe slaves should run away.
 - G It was dangerous, and he knew he could get into serious trouble.
 - H He was not sure that the people were telling the truth about Ripley.
 - J He needed to talk to people he trusted, to get their advice.

GUIDED PRACTICE AND STRATEGIES TEST *CONTINUED*

- 3 Read this sentence from paragraph 2.

My owner trusted me and let me come and go as I please, long as I didn't try to read or write anythin'.

What is ironic about the owner's ideas?

- A The owner should know better than to allow a slave to come and go as he pleases.
- B The narrator does not read or write, but is clearly not trustworthy.
- C The owner was right to trust the narrator in the past, but that has changed now that his slave can read.
- D Once the narrator discovers he can help others gain their freedom, he will want to write about his experiences.

- 4 Read this phrase from the last sentence of paragraph 4.

... I would of fell out of that rowboat

This use of dialect is part of the writer's style. What is the main effect of this style?

- F to present the narrator as very different from the people around him
- G to help the reader understand the way the narrator feels about everything that happens
- H to create a sense of awe in the reader—the narrator is uneducated, and still speaks so well
- J to show that the narrator did not know proper grammar

GUIDED PRACTICE AND STRATEGIES TEST *CONTINUED*

- 5 Read the first sentence from paragraph 6.

Now it was funny.

Which statement best restates what the narrator means by this statement?

- A It was really strange.
- B It always made me laugh.
- C The mood was so serious.
- D It was not funny then, but it makes me laugh now.

- 6 In paragraph 6, the narrator calls the people he helped his passengers. The connotation of passengers shows that he —

- F takes them on a trip merely so he can get paid
- G feels they are his travel partners
- H feels responsible to carry them safely to the end of the journey
- J wishes he could take the trip and leave them behind

GUIDED PRACTICE AND STRATEGIES TEST *CONTINUED*

- 7 Why would it be important that the narrator did not see the running-aways that he helped?
- A so that he would not refuse to take someone he did not like
 - B so that he could not go back to the passengers' families and tell what they had done
 - C so that the running-aways could not report him to his master
 - D so that he could not give their names or identities; even if he was caught and beaten
- 8 What is the best summary of how the narrator helped the slaves escape to Ripley?
- F He would meet two or three slaves outside or in a dark home. The slaves would have to say the correct password. Then he would take them onto his boat and row them to the light. He dropped the passengers off on the other side of the river, in Ripley, and went back to his own home.
 - G He would wait until someone came to him and said the password. Then he would go to his boat and wait for two or three slaves to come. They would all take the boat to the other side. After the escaped slaves were safely off the boat, he rowed back home.
 - H Whenever he saw that there was no moon, he went to the woman's house. He waited in the dark until she came out. Then he would meet two or three people. After he told them the password, they would go to his boat. He would row them to the other side. They would get off, and he would row back home.
 - J He would row his boat to the other side and wait for people to come to him. When they came to him, they would say the password. Then he would row them back with him to his house.

GUIDED PRACTICE AND STRATEGIES TEST *CONTINUED*

- 9 How did the narrator's wife escape?
- A She was helping him row the boat when he almost got caught.
 - B She escaped separately and they reunited in Ohio.
 - C He went back for her while he was on the run.
 - D He had a friend bring her to him before he crossed the river.

- 10 Which statement best completes the cause and effect chart?

| Cause | Effect |
|---|--|
| girl wants her freedom | narrator carries her across river |
| people escape in the dark | Mr. Rankins has a bright light to guide them |
| narrator helps many people run away | slave catchers chase him |
| narrator does not want to be caught in Ripley | _____ |

- F narrator only travels at night
- G Mr. Rankins adds a bell
- H narrator's wife escapes, too
- J narrator moves to Detroit

GUIDED PRACTICE AND STRATEGIES TEST *CONTINUED*

11 Read the very last phrase of the selection.

*... their grandpa brought
emancipation to loads of slaves he
could touch and feel in the dark but
never ever see*

The literal meaning of this phrase is clear. What does it mean figuratively?

- A Their grandfather helped people who had troubles similar to his own. He could relate to them, even though he never really knew each one personally.
- B Their grandfather had no real idea where he was going or what would happen to the people he helped.
- C Their grandfather chose to be ignorant about people's identities because he didn't want to share in their sorrows.
- D Their grandfather helped so many people that he became blind to their needs.

12 Suppose that the first girl the man helped across the river also told her story.

What does the narrator of "Carrying the Running-Aways" selection describe that she could not?

- F the effect of the Emancipation Proclamation
- G the feelings of fear on that first ride across the river
- H his or her dreams and hopes of freedom
- J the process of becoming involved in helping people escape