

FRESHMEN ENGLISH

SUMMER READING PACKET FOR STUDENTS IN CP/CCP ENGLISH

SUMMER 2020



DUE TO THE ADJUSTMENTS FOR 2019-2020 SCHOOL YEAR, THIS SUMMER REQUIRED READING WILL BE DIFFERENT THAN IN YEARS PAST. AS ALWAYS, WE ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO READ FULL NOVELS FOR PLEASURE AND PRACTICE BUT HAVE PROVIDED FOCUSED READING IN THIS PACKET IN ORDER TO BETTER REVIEW SPECIFIC SKILLS.

IN THIS PACKET, STUDENTS ARE PROVIDED WITH TWO TEXTS, A WORK OF FICTION AND NON-FICTION READING. WITHIN EACH TEXT ARE A SET OF EMBEDDED QUESTIONS TO AID STUDENT COMPREHENSION AND THINKING WHILE READING. IN ADDITION, EACH TEXT IS FOLLOWED BY AN ACTIVITY THAT INCLUDES BOTH MULTIPLE-CHOICE AND SHORT RESPONSE ANALYTICAL QUESTIONS.

STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO READ, ANSWER THE EMBEDDED QUESTIONS, AND COMPLETE THE ACTIVITIES FOR EACH TEXT. THE QUESTIONS WILL BE DUE TO THEIR ENGLISH TEACHER WITHIN THE FIRST WEEK OF THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR AND BE ONE OF YOUR CHILD'S FIRST ENGLISH GRADES FOR THE YEAR.

PLEASE PRINT OUT THE PACKET SO THAT STUDENTS MAKE WORK DIRECTLY ON THE TEXT AND QUESTIONS AND SUBMIT THEM WHEN SCHOOL BEGINS.

SUMMER READING PACKET
SUMMER 2020

STUDENT NAME: _____

ENGLISH TEACHER: _____

Lamb to the Slaughter

By Roald Dahl

Roald Dahl (1916-1990) was a British novelist, short story writer, and poet. Dahl's books and stories are known for their unexpected endings and often darkly comic themes. In this short story, Dahl describes a woman's reaction when her husband comes home with surprising news.

Skill Focus:

As part of this assignment, you will analyze how a character's choices and actions affect plot development. This means paying attention to how characters react to specific dialogue or events and how those reactions move the story forward. As you read, take notes on what lines of dialogue or events cause Mary to change her behavior.

Footnotes provide definitions for marked words.

The room was warm and clean, the curtains drawn, the two table lamps alight — hers and the one by the empty chair opposite. On the sideboard behind her, two tall glasses, soda water, whiskey. Fresh ice cubes in the Thermos bucket.

Mary Maloney was waiting for her husband to come home from work.

Now and again she would glance up at the clock, but without anxiety, merely to please herself with the thought that each minute gone by made it nearer the time when he would come. There was a slow smiling air about her, and about everything she did. The drop of a head as she bent over her sewing was curiously tranquil. Her skin — for this was her sixth month with child — had **acquired** a wonderful translucent¹ quality, the mouth was soft, and the eyes, with their new placid² look, seemed larger darker than before. When the clock said ten minutes to five, she began to listen, and a few moments later, punctually as always, she heard the tires on the gravel outside, and the car door slamming, the footsteps passing the window, the key turning in the lock. She laid aside her sewing, stood up, and went forward to kiss him as he came in.

“Hullo darling,” she said.

[5] “Hullo darling,” he answered.

She took his coat and hung it in the closet. Then she walked over and made the drinks, a strongish one for him, a weak one for herself; and soon she was back again in her chair with the sewing, and he in the other, opposite, holding the tall glass with both hands, rocking it so the ice cubes tinkled against the side.

¹ **Translucent** (*adjective*) : allowing light to pass through

² **Placid** (*adjective*) : not easily upset or excited; involving little movement or activity

For her, this was always a **blissful** time of day. She knew he didn't want to speak much until the first drink was finished, and she, on her side, was content to sit quietly, enjoying his company after the long hours alone in the house. She loved to luxuriate³ in the presence of this man, and to feel — almost as a sunbather feels the sun — that warm male glow that came out of him to her when they were alone together. She loved him for the way he sat loosely in a chair, for the way he came in a door, or moved slowly across the room with long strides. She loved the intent, far look in his eyes when they rested on her, the funny shape of the mouth, and especially the way he remained silent about his tiredness, sitting still with himself until the whiskey had taken some of it away.

Comprehension Check: Circle the correct answer!

What does Mary enjoy most about time with her husband after work?

- A. She likes his quiet presence.
- B. She likes how excited he is to see her.
- C. She likes talking to him about his day.
- D. She is no longer alone.

“Tired darling?”

“Yes,” he said. “I’m tired,” And as he spoke, he did an unusual thing. He lifted his glass and drained it in one swallow although there was still half of it, at least half of it left. She wasn't really watching him, but she knew what he had done because she heard the ice cubes falling back against the bottom of the empty glass when he lowered his arm. He paused a moment, leaning forward in the chair, then he got up and went slowly over to fetch himself another.

[10] “I’ll get it!” she cried, jumping up.

“Sit down,” he said.

When he came back, she noticed that the new drink was dark amber with the quantity of whiskey in it.

“Darling, shall I get your slippers?”

“No.”

[15] She watched him as he began to sip the dark yellow drink, and she could see little oily swirls in the liquid because it was so strong.

“I think it’s a shame,” she said, “that when a policeman gets to be as senior as you, they keep him walking about on his feet all day long.”

³ “Luxuriate” means to enjoy yourself to an extreme degree.

He didn't answer, so she bent her head again and went on with her sewing; but each time he lifted the drink to his lips, she heard the ice cubes clinking against the side of the glass.

"Darling," she said. "Would you like me to get you some cheese? I haven't made any supper because it's Thursday."

"No," he said.

[20] "If you're too tired to eat out," she went on, "it's still not too late. There's plenty of meat and stuff in the freezer, and you can have it right here and not even move out of the chair."

Her eyes waited on him for an answer, a smile, a little nod, but he made no sign.

"Anyway," she went on, "I'll get you some cheese and crackers first."

"I don't want it," he said.

She moved uneasily in her chair, the large eyes still watching his face. "But you must eat! I'll fix it anyway, and then you can have it or not, as you like."

[25] She stood up and placed her sewing on the table by the lamp.

"Sit down," he said. "Just for a minute, sit down."

It wasn't till then that she began to get frightened.

Comprehension Check: Circle the correct answer!

How can Mary tell there is something wrong with her husband?

- A. He is late coming home.
- B. He does not want a drink.
- C. He drinks more than usual.
- D. He is oddly quiet.

"Go on," he said. "Sit down."

She lowered herself back slowly into the chair, watching him all the time with those large, bewildered⁴ eyes. He had finished the second drink and was staring down into the glass, frowning.

[30] "Listen," he said. "I've got something to tell you."

"What is it, darling? What's the matter?"

He had now become absolutely motionless, and he kept his head down so that the light from the lamp beside him fell across the upper part of his face, leaving the chin and mouth in shadow. She noticed there was a little muscle moving near the corner of his left eye.

⁴ **Bewilder** (*verb*) : to confuse completely

“This is going to be a bit of a shock to you, I’m afraid,” he said. “But I’ve thought about it a good deal and I’ve decided the only thing to do is tell you right away. I hope you won’t blame me too much.”

And he told her. It didn’t take long, four or five minutes at most, and she sat very still through it all, watching him with a kind of dazed horror as he went further and further away from her with each word.

[35] “So there it is,” he added. “And I know it’s kind of a bad time to be telling you, but there simply wasn’t any other way. Of course I’ll give you money and see you’re looked after. But there needn’t really be any fuss. I hope not anyway. It wouldn’t be very good for my job.”

Comprehension Check: Circle the correct answer!

What does Patrick reveal to Mary?

- A. that he quit his job
- B. that he is leaving her
- C. that he does not want a baby
- D. that he lost his job

Her first instinct⁵ was not to believe any of it, to reject it all. It occurred to her that perhaps he hadn’t even spoken, that she herself had imagined the whole thing. Maybe, if she went about her business and acted as though she hadn’t been listening, then later, when she sort of woke up again, she might find none of it had ever happened.

“I’ll get the supper,” she managed to whisper, and this time he didn’t stop her.

When she walked across the room she couldn’t feel her feet touching the floor. She couldn’t feel anything at all — except a slight nausea and a desire to vomit. Everything was automatic now — down the steps to the cellar, the light switch, the deep freeze, the hand inside the cabinet taking hold of the first object it met. She lifted it out, and looked at it. It was wrapped in paper, so she took off the paper and looked at it again.

A leg of lamb.

[40] All right then, they would have lamb for supper. She carried it upstairs, holding the thin bone-end of it with both her hands, and as she went through the living-room, she saw him standing over by the window with his back to her, and she stopped.

“For God’s sake,” he said, hearing her, but not turning round. “Don’t make supper for me. I’m going out.”

⁵ a way of behaving, thinking, or feeling that is not learned

At that point, Mary Maloney simply walked up behind him and without any pause she swung the big frozen leg of lamb high in the air and brought it down as hard as she could on the back of his head.

She might just as well have hit him with a steel club.

She stepped back a pace, waiting, and the funny thing was that he remained standing there for at least four or five seconds, gently swaying. Then he crashed to the carpet.

[45] The violence of the crash, the noise, the small table overturning, helped bring her out of the shock. She came out slowly, feeling cold and surprised, and she stood for a while blinking at the body, still holding the ridiculous piece of meat tight with both hands.

All right, she told herself. So I've killed him.

Comprehension Check: Circle the correct answer!

What has Mary Maloney done?

- A. stabbed her husband with a kitchen knife
- B. killed her husband with a leg of lamb
- C. shot her husband with a handgun
- D. left her husband

It was extraordinary, now, how clear her mind became all of a sudden. She began thinking very fast. As the wife of a detective, she knew quite well what the penalty would be. That was fine. It made no difference to her. In fact, it would be a relief. On the other hand, what about the child? What were the laws about murderers with unborn children? Did they kill them both — mother and child? Or did they wait until the tenth month? What did they do?

Mary Maloney didn't know. And she certainly wasn't prepared to take a chance.

She carried the meat into the kitchen, placed it in a pan, turned the oven on high, and shoved it inside. Then she washed her hands and ran upstairs to the bedroom. She sat down before the mirror, tidied her hair, touched up her lips and face. She tried a smile. It came out rather peculiar.⁶ She tried again.

[50] "Hullo Sam," she said brightly, aloud.

The voice sounded peculiar too.

"I want some potatoes please, Sam. Yes, and I think a can of peas."

That was better. Both the smile and the voice were coming out better now. She rehearsed it several times more. Then she ran downstairs, took her coat, went out the back door, down the garden, into the street.

⁶ **Peculiar** (*adjective*) : unusual or not normal

It wasn't six o'clock yet and the lights were still on in the grocery shop.

[55] "Hullo Sam," she said brightly, smiling at the man behind the counter.

"Why, good evening, Mrs. Maloney. How're you?"

"I want some potatoes please, Sam. Yes, and I think a can of peas."

Comprehension Check: Circle the correct answer!

What does Mary do when she sits in front of the mirror?

- A. She decides what to make for dinner.
- B. She practices what to say to the grocer.
- C. She fixes her makeup before leaving the house.
- D. She remembers her last trip to the grocery store.

The man turned and reached up behind him on the shelf for the peas.

"Patrick's decided he's tired and doesn't want to eat out tonight," she told him. "We usually go out Thursdays, you know, and now he's caught me without any vegetables in the house."

[60] "Then how about meat, Mrs. Maloney?"

"No, I've got meat, thanks. I got a nice leg of lamb from the freezer."

"Oh."

"I don't much like cooking it frozen, Sam, but I'm taking a chance on it this time. You think it'll be all right?"

"Personally," the grocer said, "I don't believe it makes any difference. You want these Idaho potatoes?"

[65] "Oh yes, that'll be fine. Two of those."

"Anything else?" The grocer cocked his head on one side, looking at her pleasantly.

"How about afterwards? What you going to give him for afterwards?"

"Well — what would you suggest, Sam?"

The man glanced around his shop. "How about a nice big slice of cheesecake? I know he likes that."

"Perfect," she said. "He loves it."

[70] And when it was all wrapped and she had paid, she put on her brightest smile and said,

"Thank you, Sam. Goodnight."

"Goodnight, Mrs. Maloney. And thank you."

And now, she told herself as she hurried back, all she was doing now, she was returning home to her husband and he was waiting for his supper; and she must cook it good, and make it

as tasty as possible because the poor man was tired; and if, when she entered the house, she happened to find anything unusual, or tragic, or terrible, then naturally it would be a shock and she'd become frantic⁷ with grief and horror. Mind you, she wasn't expecting to find anything. She was just going home with the vegetables. Mrs. Patrick Maloney going home with the vegetables on Thursday evening to cook supper for her husband.

Comprehension Check: Circle the correct answer!

Why does Mary go shopping?

- A. She no longer has a main meat dish for dinner.
- B. She needs vegetables for dinner.
- C. She needs to hide her involvement in her husband's murder.
- D. She wants to tell Sam what she had done.

That's the way, she told herself. Do everything right and natural. Keep things absolutely natural and there'll be no need for any acting at all.

Therefore, when she entered the kitchen by the back door, she was humming a little tune to herself and smiling.

[75] "Patrick!" she called. "How are you, darling?"

She put the parcel⁸ down on the table and went through into the living room; and when she saw him lying there on the floor with his legs doubled up and one arm twisted back underneath his body, it really was rather a shock. All the old love and longing for him welled⁹ up inside her, and she ran over to him, knelt down beside him, and began to cry her heart out. It was easy. No acting was necessary.

Comprehension Check: Circle the correct answer!

How does Mary react when coming home to her husband's body?

- A. She convinces herself to act normally.
- B. She realizes she overreacted.
- C. She is fearful of the consequences for her actions.
- D. She realizes she should have forgiven him.

A few minutes later she got up and went to the phone. She knew the number of the police station, and when the man at the other end answered, she cried to him, "Quick! Come quick! Patrick's dead!"

"Who's speaking?"

"Mrs. Maloney. Mrs. Patrick Maloney."

⁷ **Frantic** (*adjective*) : feeling or showing a lot of fear and worry through wild, hurried activity

⁸ a thing or collection of things wrapped in paper

⁹ **Well** (*verb*) : to arise and become more intense

[80] “You mean Patrick Maloney’s dead?”

“I think so,” she sobbed. “He’s lying on the floor and I think he’s dead.”

“Be right over,” the man said.

The car came very quickly, and when she opened the front door, two policeman walked in. She knew them both — she knew nearly all the men at that precinct¹⁰ — and she fell right into a chair, then went over to join the other one, who was called O’Malley, kneeling by the body.

“Is he dead?” she cried.

[85] “I’m afraid he is. What happened?”

Briefly, she told her story about going out to the grocer and coming back to find him on the floor. While she was talking, crying and talking, Noonan discovered a small patch of congealed¹¹ blood on the dead man’s head. He showed it to O’Malley who got up at once and hurried to the phone.

Soon, other men began to come into the house. First a doctor, then two detectives, one of whom she knew by name. Later, a police photographer arrived and took pictures, and a man who knew about fingerprints. There was a great deal of whispering and muttering beside the corpse,¹² and the detectives kept asking her a lot of questions. But they always treated her kindly. She told her story again, this time right from the beginning, when Patrick had come in, and she was sewing, and he was tired, so tired he hadn’t wanted to go out for supper. She told how she’d put the meat in the oven — “it’s there now, cooking” — and how she’d slipped out to the grocer for vegetables, and come back to find him lying on the floor.

“Which grocer?” one of the detectives asked.

She told him, and he turned and whispered something to the other detective who immediately went outside into the street.

[90] In fifteen minutes he was back with a page of notes, and there was more whispering, and through her sobbing she heard a few of the whispered phrases — “...acted quite normal...very cheerful...wanted to give him a good supper...peas...cheesecake...impossible that she...”

After a while, the photographer and the doctor departed and two other men came in and took the corpse away on a stretcher. Then the fingerprint man went away. The two detectives remained, and so did the two policeman. They were exceptionally nice to her, and Jack Noonan

¹⁰ a police station in a specific district

¹¹ “Congeal” means to solidify, especially because of cooling.

¹² a dead body

asked if she wouldn't rather go somewhere else, to her sister's house perhaps, or to his own wife who would take care of her and put her up for the night.

Comprehension Check: Circle the correct answer!
How does speaking to the grocer affect the detectives' view of Mary?

- A. They become afraid of her.
- B. They become more suspicious of her.
- C. They become convinced that she is guilty.
- D. They become convinced that she is innocent.

No, she said. She didn't feel she could move even a yard at the moment. Would they mind awfully if she stayed just where she was until she felt better. She didn't feel too good at the moment, she really didn't.

Then hadn't she better lie down on the bed? Jack Noonan asked.

No, she said. She'd like to stay right where she was, in this chair. A little later, perhaps, when she felt better, she would move.

[95] So they left her there while they went about their business, searching the house.

Occasionally one of the detectives asked her another question. Sometimes Jack Noonan spoke at her gently as he passed by. Her husband, he told her, had been killed by a blow on the back of the head administered with a heavy blunt instrument, almost certainly a large piece of metal. They were looking for the weapon. The murderer may have taken it with him, but on the other hand he may have thrown it away or hidden it somewhere on the premises.¹³

"It's the old story," he said. "Get the weapon, and you've got the man."

Later, one of the detectives came up and sat beside her. Did she know, he asked, of anything in the house that could've been used as the weapon? Would she mind having a look around to see if anything was missing — a very big spanner,¹⁴ for example, or a heavy metal vase.

They didn't have any heavy metal vases, she said.

"Or a big spanner?"

[100] She didn't think they had a big spanner. But there might be some things like that in the garage.

The search went on. She knew that there were other policemen in the garden all around the house. She could hear their footsteps on the gravel outside, and sometimes she saw a flash of a torch through a chink in the curtains. It began to get late, nearly nine she noticed by the clock

¹³ property

¹⁴ a wrench

on the mantle. The four men searching the rooms seemed to be growing weary,¹⁵ a trifle **exasperated**.

Comprehension Check: Circle the correct answer!

Why can't the police find the murder weapon?

- A. They think the murder weapon is a spanner.
- B. They are not very intelligent.
- C. They have no desire to solve Patrick's murder.
- D. They do not believe Patrick was murdered.

"Jack," she said, the next time Sergeant Noonan went by. "Would you mind giving me a drink?"

"Sure I'll give you a drink. You mean this whiskey?"

"Yes please. But just a small one. It might make me feel better."

[105] He handed her the glass.

"Why don't you have one yourself," she said. "You must be awfully tired. Please do. You've been very good to me."

"Well," he answered. "It's not strictly allowed, but I might take just a drop to keep me going."

One by one the others came in and were persuaded to take a little nip of whiskey. They stood around rather awkwardly with the drinks in their hands, uncomfortable in her presence, trying to say **consoling** things to her. Sergeant Noonan wandered into the kitchen, come out quickly and said, "Look, Mrs. Maloney. You know that oven of yours is still on, and the meat still inside."

"Oh dear me!" she cried. "So it is!"

[110] "I better turn it off for you, hadn't I?"

"Will you do that, Jack. Thank you so much."

When the sergeant returned the second time, she looked at him with her large, dark tearful eyes. "Jack Noonan," she said.

"Yes?"

"Would you do me a small favor — you and these others?"

[115] "We can try, Mrs. Maloney."

"Well," she said. "Here you all are, and good friends of dear Patrick's too, and helping to catch the man who killed him. You must be terrible hungry by now because it's long past your

¹⁵ **Weary** (*adjective*) : feeling or showing tiredness

supper time, and I know Patrick would never forgive me, God bless his soul, if I allowed you to remain in his house without offering you decent **hospitality**. Why don't you eat up that lamb that's in the oven. It'll be cooked just right by now."

"Wouldn't dream of it," Sergeant Noonan said.

"Please," she begged. "Please eat it. Personally I couldn't touch a thing, certainly not what's been in the house when he was here. But it's all right for you. It'd be a favor to me if you'd eat it up. Then you can go on with your work again afterwards."

There was a good deal of hesitating among the four policemen, but they were clearly hungry, and in the end they were persuaded to go into the kitchen and help themselves. The woman stayed where she was, listening to them speaking among themselves, their voices thick and sloppy because their mouths were full of meat.

[120] "Have some more, Charlie?"

"No. Better not finish it."

"She wants us to finish it. She said so. Be doing her a favor."

"Okay then. Give me some more."

"That's the hell of a big club the guy must've used to hit poor Patrick," one of them was saying. "The doc says his skull was smashed all to pieces just like from a sledgehammer."

[125] "That's why it ought to be easy to find."

"Exactly what I say."

"Whoever done it, they're not going to be carrying a thing like that around with them longer than they need."

One of them belched.

"Personally, I think it's right here on the premises."

[130] "Probably right under our very noses. What you think, Jack?"

And in the other room, Mary Maloney began to giggle.

Comprehension Check: Circle the correct answer!

Why does Mary insist that the officers eat dinner?

- A. to make them tired
- B. to thank them for helping
- C. to destroy the murder weapon
- D. to keep them at the house

Student Name: _____

English 9 - Summer Reading
Fiction - "Lamb to the Slaughter" by Roald Dahl
Analysis Questions

Purpose:

The questions in this packet are meant to assess your ability to read a text critically, interpret possible meanings of language, sections of text, or the text as a whole, and cite evidence to support your answers.

As such, it is expected that you will complete work independently and without assistance from your peers or parents in order to provide a true understanding of skills and practice!

Multiple-Choice Questions

Directions: Please read each question and its answer choices CAREFULLY. After referring to the text as needed, choose the BEST answer for each question by writing its letter on the line provided.

- _____1. What is the meaning of the word "tranquil" as used in paragraph 3? *[RL4]*
- A. relaxed
 - B. excited
 - C. dull
 - D. happy
- _____2. What event sets the main action of the story in motion? *[RL3]*
- A. Mary's husband arrives home from work.
 - B. Mary's husband tells her that he is leaving her.
 - C. Mary calls the police to report that her husband is dead.
 - D. Mary visits the grocer to buy some vegetables for supper.
- _____3. Which statement best describes Mary's motivation for covering up her crime (paragraphs 46-48)? *[RL3]*
- A. She wants to protect her unborn child.
 - B. She thinks she did nothing wrong.
 - C. She is afraid of life in prison.
 - D. She does not want to die.

- _____ 4. How does the detectives' conversation with the grocer affect the outcome of the story? *[RL3]*
- A. The police no longer suspect Mary of murdering her husband.
 - B. The police give up on finding the murder weapon near Mary's home.
 - C. The police wonder why Mary was acting so strangely while shopping.
 - D. The police decide to ask Mary to help them solve her husband's murder.
- _____ 5. How does Detective Noonan's comment about the murder weapon affect Mary's actions? (Paragraph 96) *[RL3]*
- A. It causes Mary to feel guilty about fooling the detectives.
 - B. It causes Mary to act naturally when the detectives question her.
 - C. It causes Mary to pretend that she and her husband were getting along well.
 - D. It causes Mary to trick the detectives into destroying the murder weapon.

Continue on to the Short Response Question



Michael Jordan: A Profile in Failure

By Jeff Stibel
2017

Jeff Stibel is a brain scientist, author, and businessman. With his partner Kobe Bryant, he founded Bryant Stibel to support others starting new businesses. In this text, Stibel discusses Michael Jordan's failures. Skill

Focus: In this lesson, you'll practice identifying an author's central idea and how they support it. This means paying attention to the evidence and reasons they give for their idea. As you read, make note of the details that support the author's central idea about failure and success.

[1] Michael Jordan needs no introduction. Something of a legend for turning failure into success, he is the author of the longest quote on my company's failure wall — which was tricky to paint but worth the extra effort:

I've missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. Twenty-six times, I've been trusted to take the game-winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.

Most of us don't fail or succeed in the glare of a national spotlight, much less do it thousands of times, with analysts endlessly critiquing¹ every move. Perhaps that's why people love sports: they provide a black and white analogy² for the gray backdrop of life. The ball is in or it's out, the basket is made or missed, the game is won or lost. Watching our favorite stars pull through when the chips are down³ **inspires** us to do the same in our own lives. And no one has **inspired** more sports fans, young and old alike, than Michael Jordan.

The story of Michael Jordan not making his high school team has been told and retold but continues to **inspire** with each retelling. In 1978, sophomore Michael Jordan tried out for the varsity⁴ basketball team at Laney High School. When the list was posted, Jordan's name wasn't on it. Instead, he was asked to play on the junior varsity team.

[5] The reasoning behind the choice wasn't that Jordan didn't have enough talent or hadn't already **distinguished** himself as an outstanding basketball player. Rather, it came down to seniority, size, and a strategic decision: The varsity team already had eleven seniors and three juniors. That left space for only one more player, and the coaches chose another sophomore,

¹ Critique (v.): to examine carefully or call out mistakes and errors

² Analogy (n.): a comparison between two things

³ "chips are down" = when in a difficult or dangerous situation

⁴ Varsity: the first string team in a sport at school

Jordan's friend Leroy Smith. Smith was not as good as Jordan, but he added size to the team, as he was 6'6" compared to Jordan's diminutive 5'10". What's more, the coaches knew that if Jordan had been chosen for the varsity team, he would play only when needed as a substitute for the more senior varsity players. On the junior varsity team he would get more playing time and a chance to truly develop.

It was a perfectly logical choice for the coaches to assign Jordan to the junior varsity team for his sophomore year. But 15-year-old Jordan was devastated⁵ when the list was posted without his name. In his mind, it was the ultimate defeat, the ultimate failure. "I went to my room and I closed the door and I cried. For a while I couldn't stop. Even though there was no one else home at the time, I kept the door shut. It was important to me that no one hear me or see me." Jordan was heartbroken and ready to give up the sport altogether until his mother convinced him otherwise.

After picking himself up off the floor, Jordan did what champions do. He let his failure and disappointment drive him to be better. He played on the junior varsity team, and he worked himself to the limit. "Whenever I was working out and got tired and figured I ought to stop, I'd close my eyes and see that list in the locker room without my name on it, and that usually got me going again."

Reading Comprehension Check: (Circle the correct answer)

After failing to make the high school varsity team, Michael Jordan...

- A. thought about playing a different sport.
- B. used his disappointment to work harder.
- C. proved to his coach that he was good enough.
- D. congratulated his best friend on making the team.

It became a pattern throughout Jordan's life that a disappointment or setback resulted in a redoubling of effort.⁶ High school rival player Kenny Gattison, who led his team to beat Jordan's team for the high school state championship, put it this way: "You got to understand what fuels that guy, what makes him great. For most people the pain of loss is temporary. [Jordan] took that loss and held on to it. It's a part of what made him."

For most people, public failure becomes public humiliation,⁷ and that leads to retreat. Fear of public speaking is a good example. Few people are psychologically afraid of speaking their mind and even fewer have physical speech impediments⁸ preventing them from doing so.

⁵ Devastate (v.): to cause someone to feel great emotional pain.

⁶ "doubling of effort" = trying harder

⁷ Humiliation (n.): a feeling of great embarrassment when one looks weak or silly

⁸ "speech impediment": a physical condition that makes speaking difficult

Yet glossophobia, the technical term for speech anxiety, is consistently ranked among the most prevalent⁹ mental disorders, with a reputed 75% of the world's population experiencing some degree of anxiety around public speaking. Our fears have little to do with speaking, of course, and far more to do with the perceived impact and reaction that our audience may have. But for Jordan and elite¹⁰ performers like him, the fear of failure and public ridicule is transformed into a drive for success.

Reading Comprehension Check: (Circle the correct answer)

How does Michael Jordan view failure differently from most people?

- A. He lets failure push him to do better.
- B. He does not let failure disappoint him.
- C. He celebrates every one of his failures.
- D. He does not publicly acknowledge his failures.

[10] The pattern of defeat followed by success would follow Jordan to the University of North Carolina and later to the NBA. His **relentless** drive would lead him to break numerous records and become the most decorated player¹¹ in the history of the NBA. What's more, he's credited with dramatically increasing the popularity of basketball both in the United States and internationally, and **inspiring** the next generation of basketball players including LeBron James, Dwyane Wade, and Kobe Bryant. You can't think of the word "champion" without thinking of Michael Jordan, and there's no better proof that failure is simply a stepping stone to success.

Michael Jordan faced another formidable¹² challenge decades later, when he became the owner of the NBA basketball franchise, the Charlotte Bobcats. Jordan had been a minority owner since 2006 but bought the majority stake from Bob Johnson in 2010. At the time, the business was hemorrhaging,¹³ so Jordan used his own money to cover the significant operating losses¹⁴ the team was experiencing.

The first season was lackluster¹⁵ but things got worse. In the 2011-2012 season, the team earned a mere 7 wins alongside 59 losses — the worst record of any team ever in the history of the NBA.

⁹ Prevalent (adj.): widespread or common

¹⁰ Elite (adj.): belonging to a group with power due to money, knowledge, or special skills

¹¹ "most decorated player": the one who has received the most honors or awards

¹² Formidable (adj.): very powerful and intimidating

¹³ "the business was hemorrhaging": losing large amounts of money

¹⁴ "operating losses": when a business is spending more than it earns

¹⁵ Lackluster (adj.): lacking greatness, unimpressive

In addition to — or maybe because of — their disastrous record, the Bobcats had poor community support. The Bobcats brand was synonymous¹⁶ with disappointment, **despite** having one of the best basketball brands of all time at the helm — Michael Jordan himself.

Reading Comprehension Check: (Circle the correct answer)

After Michael Jordan bought the Charlotte Bobcats, the team was...

- A. losing money and losing games.
- B. making money but losing games.
- C. losing money but winning games.
- D. winning games and making money.

But after the 2012-2013 season came to a close, Jordan started to turn things around. First, he brought in former Lakers assistant coach Steve Clifford to replace Mike Dunlap. In a change every bit as important as the new coach, Jordan agreed to remove himself from the process of managing the team's operations.

[15] Instead, Jordan focused on what Jordan can do better than anyone else: revitalizing¹⁷ the brand. He **applied** for and received permission to change the team name to the Charlotte Hornets. Jordan himself became more involved in community events and forged a connection between the team and the city.

The changes paid off. The team finished the 2013-2014 season with a winning record of 43-39, the second-best year in the history of the franchise. They even made it to the playoffs. At the same time, ticket and merchandise sales skyrocketed¹⁸ and public opinion improved dramatically. The team was well on its way to making both a comeback and a profit.

Reading Comprehension Check: (Circle the correct answer)

How did Michael Jordan make the Charlotte Bobcats more successful?

- A. He focused on coaching rather than branding.
- B. He returned to the court as a player for the team.
- C. He hired a new coach and focused on the branding.
- D. He learned from other coaches how to manage a team.

Most of us look to successful people and assume they can do anything because of their past successes. The old joke about asking your doctor for stock tips comes to mind, as if just because you can cure an illness, you have wisdom about everything. Doctors don't make great

¹⁶ Synonymous (adj.): having the same or nearly the same meaning as another word.

¹⁷ Revitalize (v.): to put new energy or strength into something

¹⁸ Skyrocket (v.): to increase very quickly; to take-off

stockbrokers,¹⁹ brain surgeons are horrible rocket scientists, CEOs aren't usually exceptional cooks, and basketball stars are rarely great baseball players (you can ask Jordan about that last one as well).²⁰ Experience and knowledge are only valuable where **applicable**.

This mindset doesn't just fog our external lenses,²¹ it also blurs how we see ourselves. It is often hard for successful people to admit that they won't be good at something new. In Jordan's case, his basketball skills didn't translate into basketball management. It took some time, but Jordan certainly deserves credit for acknowledging²² what wasn't working and trying new things until he hit on a winning combination. He gave up managing and focused on marketing, a skill he was uniquely qualified for. For Jordan, that became the recipe for success:

It's harder than most people think. Some people have been in this business a lot longer and still haven't put together a sustainable, successful scenario. When you make bad decisions, you learn from that and move forward. I think I'm better in that sense. I've experienced all of the different valleys and lows about ownership and the success of businesses. Does that constitute me being a better owner? Then I guess I am.

[20] Hard, yes, but flexing a new muscle²³ is also exhilarating,²⁴ especially when you eventually succeed. As Jordan puts it, "...it's been fun. It's been hard, but I've had fun doing it."

Reading Comprehension Check: (Circle the correct answer)

According to Michael Jordan, what has made him successful?

- A. his family's constant support
- B. his teammates' positive attitudes
- C. what he has learned from past coaches
- D. what he has learned from his past mistakes

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¹⁹ Stockbrokers advise people on how to make money.

²⁰ In 1994, Jordan retired from the Chicago Bulls to play minor league baseball. He quit after only one year to return to basketball.

²¹ "fog our external lenses": make it difficult to see other people

²² Acknowledge (v.): to accept or admit something is true

²³ "flexing a new muscle": trying a new skill

²⁴ Exhilarating (adj.): exciting and energizing

Student Name: _____

English 9 - Summer Reading
Non-Fiction - "Michael Jordan: A Profile in Failure" by Jeff Stibel
Analysis Questions

Purpose:

The questions in this packet are meant to assess your ability to read a text critically, interpret possible meanings of language, sections of text, or the text as a whole, and cite evidence to support your answers.

As such, it is expected that you will complete work independently and without assistance from your peers or parents in order to provide a true understanding of skills and practice!

Multiple-Choice Questions

Directions: Please read each question and its answer choices CAREFULLY. After referring to the text as needed, choose the BEST answer for each question by writing its letter on the line provided.

- _____1. What is the central idea of the article? [RI2]
- A. Michael Jordan inspired many through his skills and talents on the basketball court.
 - B. Michael Jordan inspired many through his message that failure is not necessary for success.
 - C. Michael Jordan succeeded through failure after adopting the attitude that failure can lead to success.
 - D. Michael Jordan succeeded through failure after adopting the attitude that avoiding risks can lead to success.
- _____2. Which detail from the article best demonstrates the connection between success and failure? [RI1]
- A. "Twenty-six times, I've been trusted to take the game-winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed." (Paragraph 2)
 - B. "The story of Michael Jordan not making his high school team has been told and retold, but continues to inspire with each retelling." (Paragraph 4)
 - C. "The pattern of defeat followed by success would follow Jordan to the University of North Carolina and later to the NBA." (Paragraph 10)
 - D. "It is often hard for people to admit that they won't be good at something new." (Paragraph 18)

- _____3. Which detail would be most important to include in a summary of this text? [RI3]
- A. “The ball is in or it’s out, the basket is made or missed, the game is won or lost.” (Paragraph 3)
 - B. “The reasoning behind the choice wasn’t that Jordan didn’t have enough talent or hadn’t already distinguished himself as an outstanding player.” (Paragraph 5)
 - C. “After picking himself up off the floor, Jordan did what champions do. He let his failure and disappointment drive him to be better.” (Paragraph 7)
 - D. “Fear of public speaking is a good example. Yet glossophobia, the technical term for speech anxiety, is consistently ranked among the most prevalent disorders.” (Paragraph 9)

- _____4. Which of the following best describes how the author develops the connection between success and failure in the article? [RI3]
- A. The author establishes Michael Jordan as a successful player due to long hours of practices and pure talent and skill.
 - B. The author reports statistics from Michael Jordan’s basketball record to prove he was both a success and a failure at the sport.
 - C. The author highlights key events in Michael Jordan’s basketball career to show how moments of failure or rejection pushed him harder.
 - D. The author describes what happened at Michael Jordan’s junior varsity games to show how he used missed opportunities to push him harder.

Continue on to the Short Response Question



