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PART I

Understanding Literary Elements

You want to tell a friend about a story you just read. Where will you begin? With your favorite **character** and the things he says? Maybe you want to explain the **plot**. That's what happens in the story. Or should you start with the **setting**? That's where and when the story takes place. A story also has a **point of view**. It may be told by a character in the story or by a narrator outside the story. And any interesting story will have a **theme**—the central idea or lesson.

All these elements work together to make a story. It may be a folktale or a legend. It may be realistic fiction, a fantasy, or a tale set in historical times. It may even be told as a poem. Whatever kind of story it is, it will have these elements.

Read the passage. Then answer the question that follows.

I saw her on the sky bridge near the airtrain port. She looked about my age, 13, but she didn't seem to be on her way to school. She looked lost and confused, her big eyes glancing this way and that. I would have taken her for a refugee from Outside, left homeless by the latest flooding, except she didn't look weathered enough. Her skin was normal, not blasted by the sun, and she

wasn't poor. I could tell that because she was wearing the most perfect imitations of natural fabric clothes that I had ever seen. She looked exactly like a teen in videos from 60 or 70 years ago, in blue jeans and a floppy blue sweatshirt with EAGLE PRIDE printed in gold letters. Those must have cost money, unless she had stolen them.

What is the setting of this passage?

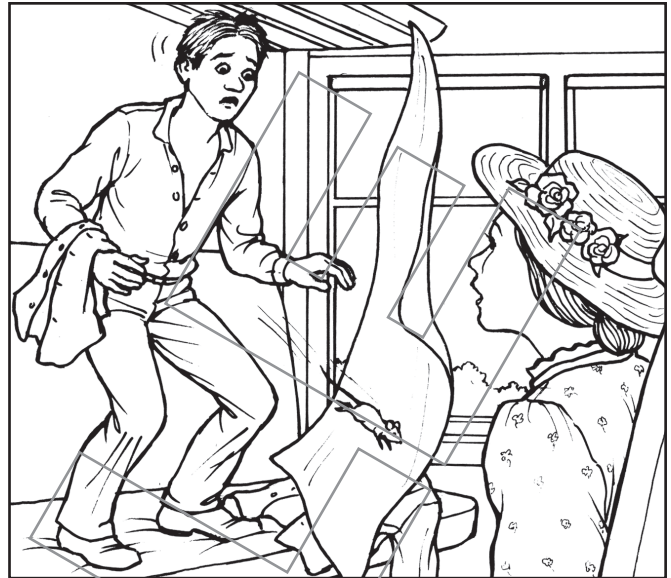
- A an American city of today
- B a city in Europe, about 1900
- C a city of the future
- D an imaginary land, "once upon a time"

Understanding
Literary
Elements

This opening paragraph helps establish the story's setting. Many details tell you that this is a science-fiction tale. The narrator is on something called a "sky bridge," near an "airtrain port." Some terrible natural disaster is hinted at. The girl dressed like a teen of "60 or 70 years ago" sounds like someone you might know. All these clues help you decide that the correct answer is choice C.

4 And yet—the lady in this case appeared to be soundly asleep. The mouse, on the other hand, seemed to be trying to crowd a year of travel into a few over-active minutes. If there is any truth in the theory of reincarnation, this particular mouse must certainly have been a mountain climber in a past life. Sometimes in its eagerness it lost its footing and slipped for half an inch or so. Then, in fright, or more probably temper, it bit. Theodoric was goaded into the bravest undertaking of his life.

5 Red as a beet and keeping watch on his sleeping fellow traveler, he swiftly and noiselessly secured the ends of his railway rug to the racks on either side of the carriage. A large curtain now hung across the compartment. In the narrow dressing room that he had thus improvised, he proceeded with great haste to loosen himself partly, and the mouse entirely, from the surrounding casings of cloth. As the freed mouse gave a wild leap to the floor, the rug slipped its fastenings and came down with a heart-curdling flop. Almost at the same moment, the awakened sleeper opened her eyes. With a movement almost quicker than the mouse's, Theodoric



pounced on the rug and hauled its ample folds chin-high over himself as he collapsed into the farther corner of the carriage. The blood raced and beat in the veins of his neck and forehead, while he waited dumbly for the emergency cord to be pulled. The lady, however, contented herself with a silent stare at her strangely wrapped companion. How much had she seen, Theodoric asked himself; and in any case, what on earth must she think of his present posture?

- 1 The story is set in England—
 - A in the present day
 - B around 1900
 - C around the time of Robin Hood
 - D “once upon a time”

- 2 The important fact to understand about Theodoric is that he is—
 - A not married
 - B afraid of mice
 - C easily made uncomfortable
 - D overly proud of his position in life

Understanding
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John Henry

Many different versions of this song exist. John Henry was probably a real person, a steel driver on the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad. The steel driver's job was to hammer steel plugs into the rock to make holes for explosive charges. In 1870, the C&O began blasting the Big Bend Tunnel through the Allegheny Mountains. The company brought in a new machine, a steam-powered drill, to replace the steel drivers. The rest is legend.

When John Henry was a little baby,
Sitting on his mammy's knee,
He said, "The Big Bend Tunnel on the
C-and-O road
Is gonna be the death of me, Lawd, Lawd;
Gonna be the death of me."

John Henry said to his captain,
"A man ain't nothing but a man.
Before I let your steam drill beat me down,
I'll die with a hammer in my hand, Lawd,
Lawd,
Die with a hammer in my hand."

Steam drill started on the right hand,
John Henry started on the left,
"Fore I'd let that steam drill beat me down,
I'd hammer my fool self to death, Lawd,
Lawd,
Hammer my fool self to death."

Now the man who invented that steam drill,
He thought he was mighty fine,
But John Henry drove that steel fourteen
feet,
Steam drill only made nine, Lawd, Lawd,
Steam drill only made nine.

John Henry said to the captain,
"Look yonder, what do I see?
Your drill's done broke, and your hole's
done choke,
And you can't drive steel like me, Lawd,
Lawd,
Can't drive steel like me."

John Henry hammered in the mountain
Till the handle of his hammer caught fire,
He drove so hard that he broke his heart,
Then he laid down his hammer and died,
Lawd, Lawd,
Laid down his hammer and died.

They took John Henry to the graveyard,
They buried him there in the sand,
And every locomotive come roaring by
Say, "There lies a steel-driving man, Lawd,
Lawd,
There lies a steel-driving man."

- 1 Summarize the plot of the story told in this song.
