

Comprehension Assessment Simulation
P. David Pearson
Carolyn Jaynes
Leap Frog

The task today is put yourself in the role of a reader, maybe one of your students, who has been asked to read a passage and complete a comprehension task. Each of you will be completing different tasks so that in our later discussions, we can compare our experiences. So turn the page to the text you will be responsible for and follow the directions you will find there. You have 10 minutes to complete your reading and the assessment task that comes with it. If you finish early, do not disturb your neighbors. Instead, take out a book and read quietly at your seat while others are still working on the test.

If you are assigned to letter group

A
B
C
D
E
F

Your task begins on Page

2
4
6
8
10
12

Group A: Read the text and answer the multiple-choice questions that follow on the next page. In each case, circle the letter in front of the one choice you think is best.

Emily's Memory Quilts

by Clifford E. Trafzer

Emily Yellow Wolf was the oldest known Native American in the state. My editor had heard of this old woman from his wife, who met Emily briefly at an exhibition of her quilts at the Byrd Museum. As a result, my editor decided that I should write a feature story about her life for the *Seattle World Times*. I admit that at first I was not interested in the story of an elderly and obscure Native American woman. I know nothing about Native American people and was not inclined to learn about the quilts just to write a newspaper article. All this changed after I met Emily Yellow Wolf, an unforgettable character.

Emily lived in the university district of the city, and I visited her at her home on 45th Street. She answered the door with a warm smile, her small, strong stature making her look amazingly younger than her actual years. Without an introduction, she invited me into her living room. I found a spot to sit on her couch, which was covered with small scraps of colorful cloth. The elderly lady laughed as we sat down.

“All of these memories,” Emily said with a chuckle, “all of these memories.”

I took out my pencil and paper and briefly explained the purpose of my visit. Emily flashed a grin, as if she wondered what she could say that would be of interest to me.

“Tell me about yourself,” I said. “Tell me where you were born and how you learned to make such beautiful quilts.”

Emily gave me a serious look, running her fingers over her gray hair.

“I’ve been living here in Seattle for a long time now,” Emily responded. “I live here alone with all these memories.”

Emily moved her arms out from her body in a wide, sweeping motion. I asked her what she meant by “all these memories” and waited for her answer. Emily sat quietly looking at the scraps of cloth scattered around us.

“That red bandanna cloth you see over there,” Emily said, pointing to her sewing machine, “well, that is the last of the blouse I was wearing when my girl Hayley was born. That square is more than a piece of cloth, you see. It is memory, too. I put those memories into each quilt I make.”

Emily claimed that her success as a quilter was the result of incorporating her personal memories into each work of art. That was more important to her than what other people thought of her quilts. My interview with this remarkable Native American elder sparked my interest in learning more about the ways of Native American people and their interest in preserving what is important in their past.

Clifford E. Trafzer, a Wyandot Indian, has written many books about the histories and cultures of Native Americans. He is a college professor and has been involved in numerous American Indian and tribal projects.

Questions for Group A

1. The theme of the story has to do with _____
 - A the qualities of friendship
 - B the importance of honesty
 - C taking care of older people
 - D remembering the past

2. This story is most like _____
 - A a legend
 - B historical fiction
 - C a first-hand narrative
 - D a newspaper article

3. Emily attributed her success to
 - A being a native American
 - B the personal touch she put into the quilts
 - C being such a wonderful storyteller
 - D knowing a good writer like Clifford Trafzer

4. For Emily the pieces of cloth represented
 - A the opportunity to use many colors
 - B different textures that made the quilts interesting
 - C memories about key events in her life
 - D artifacts of tribal cultures

5. Emily lived
 - A in the northwest part of the United States
 - B on tribal lands
 - C in a small house in the country
 - D next door to Clifford Trafzer

Group B: Read the text and write a summary of no more than 50 words; in your summary, try to convey the most important ideas in the text. Your summary form is on the next page

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Group B: Write your summary below

Group C: As you read the passage, think about Emily’s memory quilts and the role that they played in her life. Now think about your life, your experiences, and your connections to the past and to others. Write a paragraph (about 50-100 words) about something in your life that helps you connect to your past in the way that Emily’s quilts helped her. Use the next page for your writing.

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Group C: Write your personal connection below

Group D: Read the text and answer the questions that follow on the next page. Be as brief as possible, but be sure to use complete sentences.

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Group D: Write short answers to each question.

1. What is the theme of the selection?

2. How would you describe the genre of this selection?

3. How did Emily account for her success as a quilt-maker?

4. What did the pieces of cloth symbolize for Emily?

5. Where did Emily live?

Group E: Read the text. When you finish, find someone in your group to listen to your retelling, using the checklist on the next page to score your retelling. No PEEKING!!!!

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Oral Retelling: Find someone at your table to listen to your retell. Tell them to use this checklist to guide the interview: LISTENERS: Check off all the ideas your reteller gives you, then ask if he/she has anything to add. At the end, hand this sheet to the reteller.

- _____ Emily Yellow Wolf
- _____ How the author met her
- _____ Author's reluctance to meet Emily
- _____ She was unforgettable
- _____ Where Emily lived
- _____ Her persona when she answered the door
- _____ Where he situated himself in the living room
- _____ "All of these memories..."
- _____ He explains the purpose of his visit
- _____ "Tell me about yourself..."
- _____ How you (Emily) learned to make quilts
- _____ "I live here alone with all these memories..."
- _____ She looked around her at all the scraps and the memories they represent
- _____ Red bandana cloth – Hayley was born
- _____ The square is more than a piece of cloth, it is a memory
- _____ Emily claims that success was a result of incorporating memories into quilts (vs. what people thought)
- _____ Sparked his interest in learning about Native American people

About the Author:

- _____ Written many books
- _____ College professor
- _____ Involved in projects

Group F: Fill in each blank with the word that best fits the context.

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Jigsaw #1: Get together in your letter groups (A, B, C, D, E or F) to briefly consider these questions:

1. Talk about your personal response to this task as a reader and test-taker. What sorts of feelings did it evoke? Why?
2. Talk about the format used to assess your understanding of the passage. How did the format influence the way you read the text?
3. What aspects of your understanding did it measure well? What aspects did not measure well?
4. If you were to use this format with your students (assuming they were reading passages at their instructional level), how might it either facilitate or interfere with your ability to accurately assess their comprehension?
5. At what grade levels would this format be appropriate? inappropriate? Why?
6. Be prepared to share the experiences of the your format group with individuals who were assessed using other formats.

Jigsaw #2: get together with at least one person from each letter group, A-F, to consider these questions

Now that you are in mixed format groups, your task is to compare experiences across formats.

1. Talk about personal responses and feelings as readers/test takers? Which format(s) seemed to evoke the most anxiety and concern? The least?
2. Talk about how knowledge of the format influenced how you read the text. Did different formats yield different approaches to reading the text?
3. Talk about how different formats facilitate or interfere with your ability to accurately assess students' comprehension?.
4. Are some formats better suited to older students or younger students? Higher or lower achievers?