Name: _____   Class: _____

Hamlet 1.3.78

By Gary Soto
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Gary Soto is an American poet, novelist, and memoirist. "Hamlet 1.3.78" comes from a collection called You Kiss By Th' Book. Soto begins every poem in this collection with a line from Shakespeare's plays, but then takes the poem in new and often surprising directions. As you read, take notes on the poem's use of imagery.

[1] This above all: to thine own self be true.[1]
Alas, I confess that I am not true to myself but to
    you —
The stars reveal this, the mighty oak and the rose,
The flinty[2] rocks I skipped across a brook.

[5] I have walked my loneliness to the sea,
And the sea roared in both ears.
I swallowed and tasted sadness.
I lay in the grass and closed my eyes —
I saw only you, in a dress white as a cloud.

[10] Admittedly, I'm not as tall as thee,
Neither smart as thee, nor rich as thee.
Yet, my dear lamb,
Let me be your admirer.
I am a stable boy,
[15] You a rich farmer's daughter.
Let me be like wheat in wind, bending just so,
Not the weak-stemmed daffodil, bent in rain,
Dipping its face in mud churned[3] by a workman's clogs.

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1. "This above all: to thine own self be true" is a famous line from Act I Scene 3 of William Shakespeare's Hamlet.
2. "Flinty" means containing or resembling flint, a hard gray rock.
3. **Churn** *(verb):* to stir or mix something with force

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which of the following statements best describes the theme of this poem?
    A. Being alone in nature is the best way to get over a failed relationship.
    B. Romantic love is mostly sad, lonely, and depressing.
    C. Love can make us forget who we are and what we desire.
    D. Even people who are different can approach love as equals.

2. PART B: Which of the following lines best supports the answer to Part A?
    A. "This above all: to thine own self be true. / Alas, I confess that I am not true to myself but to you" (Lines 1-2)
    B. "The stars reveal this, the mighty oak and the rose, / The flinty rocks I skipped across a brook." (Lines 3-4)
    C. "I have walked my loneliness to the sea, / And the sea roared in both ears. / I swallowed and tasted sadness." (Lines 5-7)
    D. "Let me be your admirer. / I am a stable boy, / You a rich farmer's daughter. / Let me be like wheat in wind, bending just so" (Lines 13-16)

3. PART A: How do lines 8-9 contribute to the meaning of the poem?
    A. They show that the boy dreams of marrying the girl he is in love with.
    B. They imply that the boy has only imagined the person he loves.
    C. They show how sad the boy is after losing his lover.
    D. They develop the idea that nature increases a person's sense of isolation.

4. PART B: Which of the following phrases best supports the answer to Part A?
    A. "tasted sadness" (Line 7)
    B. "lay in the grass" (Line 8)
    C. "closed my eyes" (Line 8)
    D. "dress as white as a cloud" (Line 9)

5. Consider the final image of the poem in lines 16-18. How does this image contribute to the theme of the poem?

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Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. What does "To thine own self be true" mean? How would you apply this idea to your life? Do you believe that this mindset is important "above all?"

2. In the context of this poem, how are we changed by love? How is the narrator affected by his love for the farmer's daughter? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.

3. In the context of this poem, what does it mean to feel alone? To what extent can a person be in love and still feel alone? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.