

### English III-Blizzard Bag #1

Directions: Read the poems below and answer the following questions in complete sentences responding to all aspects of each question on a separate sheet of paper. Please label the top of your paper "Blizzard Bag #1."

"I Hear America Singing" by Walt Whitman

I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,  
Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be blithe and strong,  
The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,  
The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work,  
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat, the deckhand singing on the steamboat deck,  
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter singing as he stands,  
The wood-cutter's song, the ploughboy's on his way in the morning, or at noon intermission or at sundown,  
The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young wife at work, or of the girl sewing or washing,  
Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,  
The day what belongs to the day—at night the party of young fellows, robust, friendly,  
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.

- 1). Name two of the people singing in "I Hear America Singing."**
- 2). What do you think singing represents in this poem? Consider who the singers are and what they might be signing about.**
- 3). Why do you think Whitman does not mention wealthy entrepreneurs, prominent leaders, or powerful politicians in this poem?**

"I Sit and Look Out" by Walt Whitman

I sit and look out upon all the sorrows of the world, and  
upon all oppression and shame,  
I hear secret convulsive sobs from young men at anguish  
with themselves, remorseful after deeds done,  
I see in low life the mother misused by her children, dying,  
neglected, gaunt, desperate,  
I see the wife misused by her husband, I see the  
treacherous seducer or young women,  
I mark the ranklings of jealousy and unrequited love  
attempted to be hid, I see these sights on the earth,  
I see the workings of battle, pestilence, tyranny, I see  
martyrs and prisoners,  
I observe a famine at sea, I observe the sailors casting lots  
who shall be kill'd to preserve the lives of the rest,  
I observethe slights and degradations cast by arrogant persons  
upon laborers, the poor, and upon negroes, and the like;

All these—all the meanness and agony without end I  
sitting look out upon,  
See hear, and am silent.

**4). Name one of the social injustices described in this poem.**

**5). How do you evaluate the speaker's response to the sorrows of the world? (Think about what the speaker sees and hears, why the speaker might respond in silence, and/or whether you think silence is the appropriate response).**

**6). If Whitman were to write this poem today, do you think he would list the same sorrows or different ones? Explain your opinion.**

**English III-Blizzard Bag 2**

Directions: Read the poems below and answer the following questions in complete sentences responding to all aspects of each question on a separate sheet of paper. Please label the top of your paper "Blizzard Bag #2."

"Danse Russe" by William Carlos Williams

If I when my wife is sleeping  
and the baby and Kathleen  
are sleeping  
and the sun is a flame-white disc  
in silken mists  
above shining trees,--  
if I in my north room  
dance naked, grotesquely  
before my mirror  
waving my shirt round my head  
and singing softly to myself:  
"I am lonely, lonely,  
I am best so!"  
If I admire my arms, my face,  
my shoulders, flanks, buttocks  
against the yellow drawn shades,--

Who shall say I am no  
the happy genius of my household?

- 1). What overall feeling do you get from the poem? Describe this feeling completely.
- 2). Did the last two lines surprise you? Explain what you think they mean.
- 3). Why do you think the speaker dances and sings, "I am lonely"?
- 4). How well does the poem fit your ideas about loneliness?

"anyone lived in a pretty how town" by E.E. Cummings

anyone lived in a pretty how town  
(with up so floating many bells down)  
spring summer autumn winter  
he sang his didn't he danced he did.

Women and men (both little and small)  
cared for anyone not at all

they sowed their isn't they reaped their  
Same  
sun moon stars rain

children guessed (but only a few  
and down they forgot as up they grew  
autumn winter spring summer)  
that noone loved him more by more

when by now and tree by leaf  
she laughed his joy she cried his grief  
bird by snow and stir by still  
anyone's any was all to her

someones married their everyones  
laughed their cryings and did their dance  
(sleep wake hope and then) they  
said their nevers they slept their dream

stars rain sun moon  
(and only the snow can begin to explain  
how children are apt to forget to remember  
with up so floating many bells down)

one day anyone died I guess  
(and noone stooped to kiss his face)  
busy folk buried them side by side  
little by little and was by was

all by all and deep by deep  
and more by more they dream their sleep  
noone and anyone earth by april  
wish by spirit and if by yes.

Women and men (both dong and ding)  
summer autumn winter spring  
reaped their sowing and went their came  
sun moon stars rain

- 5). Retell in your own words the story that unfolds in this poem. What, in your view, is the point of the story?
- 6). Notice the refrains—lines in which the same words are repeated—in this poem. What ideas do they suggest to you?
- 7). Williams (1<sup>st</sup> poem) believed that the goal of a poem must be “to refine, to clarify, to intensify that eternal moment we alone live.” Do you think “Dance Russe” clarifies a particular moment? Would

Cummings (2<sup>nd</sup> poem) agree with Williams's description of the goal of poetry? Defend your opinions.

- 8). Describe a real life situation in which a person's individuality is stifled because of peer group pressure to conform. What advice do you think "anyone" in Cummings's poem would offer this person?

### Heisler: English III-Blizzard Bag 3

Directions: Read the poems below and answer the following questions in complete sentences responding to all aspects of each question on a separate sheet of paper. Please label the top of your paper "Blizzard Bag #3."

"Ending Poem" by Aurora Levins Morales and Rosario Morales

I am what I am.  
*A child of the Americas.*  
A light-skinned mestiza of the Caribbean.  
*A child of many diaspora, born into this continent at a crossroads.*  
I am Puerto Rican. I am U.S. American.  
*I am New York Manhattan and the Bronx.*  
A mountain-born, country-bred, homegrown jibara child,  
*up from the shtetl, a California Puerto Rican Jew.*  
A product of the New York ghettos I have never known.  
*I am an immigrant*  
and the daughter and granddaughter of immigrants.  
*We didn't know our forbears' names with a certainty.*  
They aren't written anywhere.  
*First names only, or mija, negra, ne, honey, sugar, dear.*

I come from the dirt where the cane was grown.  
*My people didn't go to dinner parties. They weren't invited.*  
I am caribena, island grown.  
*Spanish is in my flesh, ripples from my tongue, lodges in my hips,*  
the language of garlic and mangoes.  
*Boricua. As Boricuas come from the isle of Manhattan.*  
I am latinoamerica, rooted in the history of my continent.  
*I speak from that body. Just brown and pink and full of drums inside.*  
I am not African.  
*Africa waters the roots of my tree, but I cannot return.*

I am not Taina.  
*I am a late leaf of that ancient tree,*  
and my roots reach into the soil of two Americas.  
*Taino is in me, but there is no way back.*

I am not European, though I have dreamt of those cities.  
*Each plate is different,*  
wood, clay, papier mache', metal, basketry, a leave, a coconut shell.  
*Europe lives in me but I have no home there.*

The table has a cloth woven by one, dyed by another,  
*embroidered by another still.*  
I am a child of many mothers.  
*They have kept it all going*

All the civilizations erected on their backs.  
*All the dinner parties given with their labor.*

We are new.  
*They gave us life, kept us going,*  
Brought us to where we are.  
*Born at a crossroads.*  
Come, lay that dishcloth down. Eat, dear, eat.  
*History made us.*  
We will not eat ourselves up inside anymore.

*And we are whole.*

- 1). Pick a line from this poem that you like. Write it down. Then, discuss this line and describe why you like it in reference to the poem.
- 2). What do you think the images of roots, trees, and leaves in lines 24-28 represent?
- 3). How do you interpret the last two lines of the poem?
- 4). Suggest a reason for the title "Ending Poem" other than the writer's use of the poem to end a poetry reading and a book.

"Tia Chucha" by Luis J. Rodriguez

Every few years  
Tia Chucha would visit the family  
in a tornado of song  
and open us up  
as if we were an overripe avocado.  
She was a dumpy, black-haired  
creature of upheaval,  
who often came unannounced  
with a bag of presents  
including home-made perfumes and colognes  
that smelled something like  
rotting fish  
on a hot day at the tuna cannery.

They said she was crazy.  
Oh sure, she once ran out naked  
to catch the postman  
with a letter that didn't belong to us.

I mean, she had this annoying habit  
of boarding city buses  
and singing at the top of her voice  
(one bus driver even refused to go on  
until she got off).  
But crazy?

To me, she was the wisp  
of the wind's freedom,  
a music-maker  
who once tried to teach me guitar  
but ended up singing  
and singing,  
me listening  
and her singing  
until I put the instrument down  
and watched the clock  
click the lesson time away.

I didn't learn guitar,  
but I learned something  
about her craving  
for the new, the unbroken  
. . . so she could break it.  
Periodically she banished  
herself from the family  
and was the better for it.

I secretly admired Tia Chucha.  
She was always quick with a story,  
another "*Pepito*" joke,  
or a hand-written lyric  
that she would produce regardless of the occasion.

She was a despot  
of desire;  
uncontainable  
as a splash of water  
on a varnished table.

I wanted to remove  
the layers  
of unnatural seeing  
the way Tia Chucha beheld  
the world, with first eyes,  
like an infant  
who can discern  
the elixir

within milk.

I wanted to be  
one of the prizes  
she stuffed into her rumpled bag.

**5). What are your impressions of Tia Chucha? Discuss thoroughly.**

**6). Which lines of the poem do you think describe Tia Chucha most effectively?**

**7). Do you think you would appreciate or disapprove of a relative like Tia Chucha? Explain your answer. (Think about: how her visits affect the speaker's family, how others, such as the bus driver, view her, what happens when she tries to teach the speaker to play guitar, and the way she sees the world.**

**8). It is sometimes said that people who are "crazy" see the world more clearly than do others. Do you agree or disagree? Explain your opinion, making reference to Tia Chucha and to someone else—for example, a character in a movie or TV show—who reminds you of her.**

