



Reading Comprehension Worksheet

Grade 11

Answer Key

Inheritance

*My grandmother left me her hands,
or so my mother always says,
the same stubborn knuckles,
the same way of gripping a pen
like it might try to leave before I am finished with it.*

*I used to think she meant it as a compliment,
until I noticed how carefully
she said it around my grandmother's silences,
the ones that lasted through whole holidays,
inherited, apparently, along with the knuckles.*

*There is a photograph of my grandmother at nineteen,
unsmiling, her hands folded so precisely
in her lap that I wonder now
whether she was hiding them
or presenting them, like evidence.*

*I keep the photograph in a drawer
I do not open often,
the way you keep something
you are not ready to call
a warning, or a gift,
or possibly, unbearably, both at once.*

*My mother says I have my grandmother's hands.
She has never once said
whether she means that
as something I should be proud of,
or something I should watch closely,
the way you watch a door
that has been known, before,
to close on its own.*

Circle the Correct Answer

1. What does the speaker's mother repeatedly say the speaker inherited from the grandmother?

Answer: a) Her hands

2. What does the speaker notice about how the mother discusses the grandmother's silences?

Answer: b) The mother says it carefully, suggesting some discomfort

3. How does the speaker describe the grandmother's hands in the photograph?

Answer: a) Folded precisely, possibly hiding or presenting them like evidence

4. What has the mother never clarified, according to the final stanza?

Answer: a) Whether the speaker should be proud or watchful of inheriting the grandmother's hands

True or False

5. The poem is written in the first person.

Answer: True

6. The mother clearly states that inheriting the grandmother's hands is a positive thing.

Answer: False

7. The speaker keeps the photograph of the grandmother somewhere they open often.

Answer: False

Fill in the Blank

8. The speaker grips a pen like it might try to _____ before they are finished with it.

Answer: leave

9. The poem compares the drawer's contents to something the speaker is not ready to call a warning, or a _____.

Answer: gift

Think and Explain

10. This poem is deliberately ambiguous about whether inheriting the grandmother's traits is presented as positive, negative, or both. Argue for one interpretation using specific textual evidence, while acknowledging at least one piece of evidence that complicates or challenges your reading.

Sample answer: Accept well-supported answers arguing for any reasonable interpretation (positive, negative, or ambivalent), as long as the student cites specific lines as evidence and acknowledges a complicating detail, for example noting the 'warning, or a gift... possibly, unbearably, both at once' line as evidence of intentional ambiguity that resists a single clean interpretation.

11. Why might a poet choose to leave a poem's central question deliberately unresolved, rather than clearly stating whether inheritance (of traits, silences, or family patterns) is something to celebrate or fear? What does this ambiguity contribute to the poem's effect on the reader?

Sample answer: Accept reasonable answers noting that deliberate ambiguity mirrors the genuine complexity of inherited family traits and patterns, which are rarely purely positive or negative in real life, and that leaving the question open invites the reader to sit with the same uncertainty the speaker experiences, making the poem's emotional effect more resonant and honest than a resolved answer would be.