



Reading Comprehension Worksheet

Grade 12

Answer Key

The Foreman's Toast

*Thirty-one years, and they hand me a watch
like time was ever something I was short on.
Let me tell you about Danny Reyes,
who I trained myself, back when this floor
still smelled like something honest—*

*He asks too many questions, that one.
Wanted to know why the numbers looked the way they looked
in '09, when half of you were still finishing school.
I told him some things aren't questions,
they're just weather. You don't interrogate the rain.*

*My wife's here somewhere. Don't tell her
I said that thing about the rain,
she'll say I'm quoting myself again,
like I'm the poet laureate of loading dock number four.
Maybe I am. Nobody else wanted the job.*

*I built this line with my own two hands—
well, mine and forty other pairs, but you get the idea—
and if a few of you left early over the years
without much of a goodbye,
that's not a story I'm going to tell tonight.*

*Tonight is about the good years,
the bowling league, the Christmas bonuses
back when there were Christmas bonuses,
and Danny Reyes can ask his questions
to somebody who still has to answer them.*

*Raise your glasses. To thirty-one years
of doing things the way they've always been done,
because if it wasn't broken enough to fire me,
then frankly, I don't see the problem,
and neither, I'd bet, do most of you.*

Circle the Correct Answer

1. What event is taking place in this poem?

Answer: a) A retirement toast being given by a longtime foreman

2. What does Danny Reyes ask the speaker about?

Answer: a) Why the numbers looked the way they did in 2009

3. How does the speaker respond to being asked difficult questions?

Answer: b) He deflects, saying some things aren't questions, they're just weather

4. What does the speaker say about people who "left early over the years without much of a goodbye"?

Answer: a) That it is not a story he is going to tell tonight

True or False

5. The speaker directly and fully explains what happened with the numbers in 2009.

Answer: False

6. The speaker jokes about being quoted by his wife.

Answer: True

7. The speaker openly and thoroughly discusses why some workers left without a goodbye.

Answer: False

Fill in the Blank

8. The speaker says some things aren't questions, they're just _____.

Answer: weather

9. The speaker jokingly calls himself the poet laureate of loading dock number _____.

Answer: four

Think and Explain

10. This poem is a dramatic monologue, a poem spoken entirely in a character's own voice to an implied audience within the poem. What does the speaker seem to be avoiding or deflecting throughout the toast, and what specific lines reveal this avoidance?

Sample answer: Accept reasonable answers noting that the speaker repeatedly deflects direct questions about difficult periods (the 2009 numbers, workers who left without explanation), using vague phrases and redirection rather than direct answers, citing specific lines such as 'you don't interrogate the rain' or 'that's not a story I'm going to tell tonight' as evidence of this avoidance.

11. A dramatic monologue often reveals more about the speaker than the speaker intends to reveal. What does this poem suggest about the speaker's character that he himself does not seem to fully recognize? Use evidence from the poem to support your answer.

Sample answer: Accept reasonable answers noting that the speaker likely reveals defensiveness, discomfort with accountability, and possible awareness of past wrongdoing that he is not acknowledging directly, evidenced by his repeated deflections, his dismissal of Danny's legitimate questions, and his final insistence that 'if it wasn't broken enough to fire me, then frankly, I don't see the problem,' which reads as defensive rather than genuinely confident.