



Reading Comprehension Worksheet

Grade 8

Answer Key

Static

*Buzzing bulbs above the busy hallway,
a hundred hurried heels on tile floor,
my thoughts stick and stutter, snag and swirl,
a radio caught between two stations, static, more and more.*

*The clock ticks, tocks, ticks, tocks, taunting,
counting down to something I can't name,
a hiss and hum inside my ribcage,
whispers of a worry with no shape, no aim.*

*I press my palms flat on the cool desk,
breathe in slow, and hold it, hold it, hold,
until the buzzing quiets to a murmur,
and the static settles, softening, controlled.*

*Then, quietly, the room comes back in focus:
the scratch of pencils, someone's muffled cough,
a world that never actually stopped spinning,
just one I couldn't hear when the noise wouldn't turn off.*

Circle the Correct Answer

1. What is the speaker experiencing in the first stanza?

Answer: b) A racing, scattered, static-like mental state

2. What does the speaker compare their thoughts to in the first stanza?

Answer: b) A radio caught between two stations

3. What does the speaker do to help calm down?

Answer: a) They press their palms on a desk and breathe slowly

4. What does the final stanza suggest about the world around the speaker?

Answer: b) It never stopped, but the speaker simply couldn't hear it clearly while overwhelmed

True or False

5. The poem describes a moment of anxious, overwhelmed thinking.

Answer: True

6. The speaker calms down by yelling out loud.

Answer: False

7. By the final stanza, ordinary sounds like pencils scratching become noticeable again.

Answer: True

Fill in the Blank

8. The poem describes "whispers of a worry with no shape, no _____."

Answer: aim

9. The speaker breathes in slow, and holds it, hold it, _____.

Answer: hold

Think and Explain

10. This poem uses sound devices, alliteration (repeated beginning sounds), assonance (repeated vowel sounds), and repetition, to create its effect. Identify one example of alliteration and one example of repetition in the poem, and explain how each contributes to the poem's overall mood.

Sample answer: Accept reasonable answers identifying alliteration such as 'busy hallway,' 'hundred hurried heels,' or 'stick and stutter, snag and swirl,' and repetition such as 'ticks, tocks, ticks, tocks' or 'hold it, hold it, hold,' explaining that the alliteration creates a rushed, overwhelming rhythm mimicking racing thoughts, while the repetition mimics both anxious looping and the deliberate, calming rhythm of breathing.

11. How does the poem's sound and rhythm change from the first stanza to the final stanza? Explain how this shift in sound reflects the speaker's emotional journey across the poem.

Sample answer: Accept reasonable answers noting that the first stanzas use clustered consonant sounds and quick, jarring repetition to create an overwhelmed, chaotic rhythm, while the final stanza slows down with softer sounds and calmer, more evenly paced lines, mirroring the speaker's movement from anxious static toward a calmer, more settled state of mind.