This poem, by Emily Dickinson, is a sort of riddle. Depending on your life experiences, the answer may be immediately clear, or it may very well not be. Look closely for clues in the language.

**A Narrow Fellow in the Grass**

A narrow Fellow in the grass

Occasionally rides—

You may have met him—did you not

His notice sudden is—

The Grass divides as with a Comb—

A spotted shaft is seen—

And then it closes at your feet

And opens further on—

He likes a Boggy Acre—

A Floor too cool for Corn—

Yet when a Boy, and Barefoot—

I more than once at Noon

Have passed, I thought, a Whip-lash

Unbraiding in the Sun—

When, stooping to secure it,

It wrinkled, and was gone—

Several of Nature's People

I know, and they know me—

I feel for them a transport

Of cordiality—

But never met this Fellow,

Attended, or alone—

Without a tighter breathing

And zero at the bone—

1. Who or what is the **Fellow** in this poem?
   * a whip-lash
   * a snake
   * a gust of wind
   * a boy
2. The phrase *Without a tighter breathing / And zero at the bone* most nearly indicates
   * fright.
   * cold.
   * grief.
   * awe.
3. The phrase **Nature's** People means
   * nature-lovers.
   * children.
   * animals.
   * neighbors.
4. The speaker of this poem is most likely
   * an adult woman.
   * an adult man.
   * Emily Dickinson, the poet.
   * a young boy.

It's true that poems often have two levels—one literal, one figurative. The next poem, also by Emily Dickinson, is full of images from nature. In exploring the second level of meaning, consider the speaker's attitude, revealed especially through surprising and jarring word choices.

**Apparently with No Surprise**

Apparently with no surprise

To any happy flower,

The frost beheads it at its play

In accidental power.

The blond assassin passes on,

The sun proceeds unmoved

To measure off another day

For an approving God.

1. Which of the following most nearly describes the author's attitude toward nature as expressed in this poem?
   * delight
   * dismay
   * indifference
   * reverence
2. The poem implies that the attitude of the flowers toward the frost is one of
   * fear.
   * horror.
   * acceptance.
   * reverence.
3. The tone of the poem implies that the speaker probably regards God as
   * benevolent.
   * just.
   * cruel.
   * angry.

Poetry often uses words in unexpected ways. This forces the reader to consider the deeper meanings of words, while also reflecting on the idea that the poet hopes to get across. Consider both the words and the ideas in this poem by Sir Walter Scott.

**Patriotism**

Breathes there the man with soul so dead,

Who never to himself hath said,

"This is my own, my native land!"

Whose heart hath ne'er within him burned

As home his footsteps he hath turned

From wandering on a foreign strand?

If such there breathe, go, mark him well;

For him no Minstrel raptures swell;

High though his titles, proud his name,

Boundless his wealth as wish can claim;

Despite those titles, power, and pelf,

The wretch, concentred all in self,

Living, shall forfeit fair renown,

And, doubly dying, shall go down

To the vile dust from whence he sprung,

Unwept, unhonored, and unsung.

1. What is the most likely meaning of the underlined word *pelf*, as used in this poem?
   * power
   * wealth
   * stealth
   * health
2. What is the poet's main idea in this poem?
   * Those who become rich must hate their country.
   * Traveling abroad helps a person appreciate home.
   * Those who do not love their country will not be honored.
   * Patriotism is the last refuge for scoundrels.
3. What does the poem mean that such people will be "doubly dying" (three lines from the end)?
   * They will not die alone.
   * They will die physically and also be forgotten.
   * Their death will be painful.
   * They will die, then rise again.
4. What does the underlined word *concentred* most likely mean?
   * swirling or curved
   * arrogant, proud
   * focused on, concerned with
   * looking upward
5. One can infer from this poem that Sir Walter Scott
   * loved his homeland.
   * was from Great Britain.
   * hated war.
   * spoke many languages.

**The Seven Ages of Man**

All the world's a stage,

And all the men and women merely players;

They have their exits and their entrances;

And one man in his time plays many parts.

His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,

Mewling … in the nurse's arms.

And then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel

And shining morning face … And then the lover,

Sighing like a furnace … Then a soldier

Full of strange oaths … Jealous of honor,

Sudden and quick in quarrel … And then the justice …

Full of wise saws and modern instances;

And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts

Into the lean and slippered pantaloon.

With spectacles on nose and pouch on side.

… and his big manly voice, Turning again toward

Childish treble, pipes and whistles in his sound.

Last scene of all,

That ends this strange eventful history,

Is second childishness, and mere oblivion,

Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything. by William Shakespeare

1. What attitude does the speaker reveal by using the word *merely* in the second line?
   * sorrow
   * anger
   * amusement
   * indifference
2. What characterizes the period of life represented by the soldier?
   * brash behavior
   * his sense of honor
   * his dedication to duty
   * his fear of cowardice
3. What is the main idea of this poem?
   * Life is a misery that never gets any better at any time.
   * Life is what each of us makes of it during our journey down the river of eternity.
   * Life is a play and it follows a specific script, none of which should cause anguish or sorrow.
   * Life is a comedy, and we are all buffoons in pantaloons no matter what we do.
4. What is the theme of the poem?
   * Death is to be feared.
   * Life is a circle that brings us back to the beginning.
   * The male of the species is the only true measure of the stages of life.
   * The stages of life are unrelated and can be altered by each individual's free will.
5. The poet uses the words *merely* (line 2) and *mere* (line 20)
   * to soften the effect of the strong images he presents to us in those lines.
   * to tie together his theme of the cycle of life.
   * convey his tone to the reader.
   * all of the above.