

DIRECTIONS Read the passage below. Then answer the questions that follow it.

from **A Tree Grows in Brooklyn**
by Betty Smith

Serene was a word you could put to Brooklyn, New York. Especially in the summer of 1912. Somber, as a word, was better. But it did not apply to Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Prairie was lovely and Shenandoah had a beautiful sound, but you couldn't fit those words into Brooklyn. Serene was the only word for it; especially on a Saturday afternoon in summer.

Late in the afternoon the sun slanted down into the mossy yard belonging to Francie Nolan's house, and warmed the worn wooden fence. Looking at the shafted sun, Francie had that same fine feeling that came when she recalled the poem they recited in school.

This is the forest primeval. The murmuring
pines and the hemlocks,
Bearded with moss, and in garments green,
indistinct in the twilight,
Stand like Druids of eld.

The one tree in Francie's yard was neither a pine nor a hemlock. It had pointed leaves which grew along green switches which radiated from the bough and made a tree which looked like a lot of opened green umbrellas. Some people called it the Tree of Heaven. No matter where its seed fell, it made a tree which struggled to reach the sky. It grew in boarded-up lots and out of neglected rubbish heaps and it was the only tree that grew out of cement. It grew lushly, but only in the tenement districts.

You took a walk on a Sunday afternoon and came to a nice neighborhood, very refined. You saw a small one of these trees through the iron gate leading to someone's yard and you knew that soon that section of Brooklyn would get to be a tenement district. The tree knew. It came there first. Afterwards, poor foreigners seeped in and the quiet old brownstone houses were hacked up into flats, feather beds were pushed out on the windowsills to air and the Tree of Heaven flourished. That was the kind of tree it was. It liked poor people.

That was the kind of tree in Francie's yard. Its umbrellas curled over, around and under her third-floor fire escape. An eleven-year-old girl sitting on this fire escape could imagine that she was living in a tree. That's what Francie imagined every Saturday afternoon in summer.





**GLE
Practice**

DIRECTIONS Now answer Numbers 1 through 6. Base your answer on the passage from "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn."

- 1 Read this sentence from the passage.

No matter where its seed fell, it made a tree which struggled to reach the sky.

The author uses the word *struggled* to suggest

- A. that the sun does not shine over certain Brooklyn neighborhoods.
- B. the hardship of overcoming the tough environment.
- C. how difficult it is for children to grow up in Williamsburg.
- D. that the trees will not grow to a great height.

- 2 In the paragraph following the poem, the poor condition of the neighborhood is brought to mind by the word

- F. *lushly*.
- G. *heaps*.
- H. *cement*.
- I. *neglected*.

- 3 Read this sentence from the passage.

Afterwards, poor foreigners seeped in and the quiet old brownstone houses were hacked up into flats, feather beds were pushed out on the windowsills to air and the Tree of Heaven flourished.

The word *hacked* is used to suggest

- A. fine woodwork.
- B. a violent neighborhood.
- C. ugly, broken rooms.
- D. coughing.

- 4 Read this sentence from the passage.

You took a walk on a Sunday afternoon and came to a nice neighborhood, very refined.

The word *refined* connotes

- F. simplicity.
- G. wealth.
- H. cleanliness.
- I. serenity.

- 5 Read this sentence from the passage.

That was the kind of tree in Francie's yard. Its umbrellas curled over, around and under her third-floor fire escape. An eleven-year-old girl sitting on this fire escape could imagine that she was living in a tree. That's what Francie imagined every Saturday afternoon in summer.

What does the word *umbrellas* suggest?

- A. It will rain in the afternoon.
- B. The tree is bad luck.
- C. The leaves are immense.
- D. The tree is protective.

- 6 Think of a neighborhood that would be interesting to describe. Decide what impression you want to create. Then describe the neighborhood in a paragraph using words with strong connotations that convey this impression. Write your answer on a sample answer sheet like the one in the back of the book.

READ
THINK
EXPLAIN