

## Exercises

North Carolina

**Exercise 4**

*The piano is an instrument of profound historical significance. Over the years, it has been used to express a range of musical visions. Read the following two poems about a piano and answer questions 1 through 10.*

**Player Piano<sup>1</sup>***by John Updike*

My stick fingers click with a snicker  
And, chuckling, they knuckle the keys;  
Light-footed, my steel feelers flicker  
And pluck from these keys melodies.

My paper can caper; abandon  
Is broadcast by dint of my din,  
And no man or band has a hand in  
The tones I turn on from within.

At times I'm a jumble of rumbles,  
At others I'm light like the moon,  
But never my numb plunker fumbles,  
misstrums me, or tries a new tune.

**'player piano':** a piano that is programmed to play tunes mechanically



**Exercises****North Carolina****Piano Keys***by Victoria Adler*

Touch on a key and feel the subtle motion.  
 Sense it sink downward, sounding out a note.  
 Touch on another, make a chord. Emotion  
 Rises unbidden, gathers in your throat.  
 Play a few measures. Feel the music dance  
 Filling the room with beauty light as air.  
 Fingers forget and move as in a trance;  
 Mind reels with feeling, wholly unaware  
 That under the shiny cover, there's a jumble  
 Of taut strings and levers. Hammers dumbly<sup>1</sup> sit  
 Springing to life each time a finger tumbles,  
 Sounding a sound each time a string is hit,  
 Numbingly jumping, blithely playing part  
 Of music they make, but cannot feel its heart.

**'dumbly:** silently

- Which literary technique does Updike use in this line from stanza two?  
 "And no man or band has a hand in..."  
**A** assonance  
**B** onomatopoeia  
**C** alliteration  
**D** cliché
- Which word in the line below exemplifies onomatopoeia?  
 "My stick fingers click with a snicker..."  
**A** stick  
**B** fingers  
**C** click  
**D** with
- Adler's poem, "Piano Keys," can be classified into which poetic genre?  
**A** haiku  
**B** sonnet  
**C** narrative poetry  
**D** epic poetry
- Which of the following phrases from Adler's poem illustrates irony?  
**A** "Touch on a key and feel the subtle motion."  
**B** "Filling the room with beauty light as air."  
**C** "Fingers forget and move as in a trance..."  
**D** "Of music they make, but cannot feel its heart."

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5. Which of these phrases from Adler's poem does **not** rely on personification for its effectiveness?
- A "Touch on another, make a chord..."
  - B "Feel the music dance..."
  - C "Fingers forget and move as in a trance..."
  - D "Hammers dumbly sit..."
6. Which literary device does Adler use in the following line from her poem?
- "Sense it sink downward, sounding out a note."
- A allusion
  - B situational irony
  - C visual imagery
  - D alliteration
7. What does the word *unbidden* mean in the context of the following sentence?
- "Emotion/ Rises unbidden, gathers in your throat."
- A unhappily
  - B joyously
  - C unexpectedly
  - D rapidly
8. Adler's poem contains which of the following conflicts?
- A music as joy vs. music as suffering
  - B freedom vs. entrapment
  - C playing the piano vs. listening to the piano
  - D mechanical movement vs. emotion
9. Which concept is addressed by both poems?
- A the difficult challenge of making music
  - B the mechanical nature of the piano
  - C the many moods that music can express
  - D the way a piano can sound like the human voice
10. What is one main way Updike's poem differs from Adler's?
- A It deals with a more serious subject.
  - B It is more formal in tone.
  - C It contains more figurative language.
  - D It uses language more playfully.