

Exercise 1

*Many writers trace their love of writing to childhood, a time when a small experience can make a deep, long-standing impact. In Eudora Welty's book *One Writer's Beginnings*, she recounts how she first fell in love with language. Read the following excerpt and learn more about Welty's development as a writer. Then answer questions 1 through 8.*

Listening

by Eudora Welty

My mother always sang to her children. Her voice came out just a little bit in the minor key. "Wee Willie Winkie's" song was wonderfully sad when she sang the lullabies.

"Oh, but now there's a record. She could have her own record to listen to," my father would have said. For there came a Victrola record of "Bobby Shafftoe" and "Rock-a-Bye Baby," all of Mother's lullabies, which could be played to take her place. Soon I was able to play her my own lullabies all day long.

Our Victrola stood in the dining room. I was allowed to climb onto the seat of a dining room chair to wind it, start the record turning, and set the needle playing. In a second I'd jumped to the floor, to spin or march around the table as the music called for—now there were all the other records I could play, too. I skinned back onto the chair just in time to lift the needle at the end, stop the record and turn it over, then change the needle. That brass receptacle with a hole in the lid gave off a metallic smell like human sweat, from all the hot needles that were fed it. Winding up, dancing,

being cocked to start and stop the record, was of course all in one the act of *listening*—to "Overture to *Daughter of the Regiment*," "Selections from *The Fortune Teller*," "Kiss Me Again," "Gypsy Dance from *Carmen*," "Stars and Stripes Forever," "When the Midnight Choo-Choo Leaves for Alabam," or whatever came next. Movement must be at the very heart of listening.

Ever since I was first read to, then started reading to myself, there has never been a line read that I didn't *hear*. As my eyes followed the sentence, a voice was saying it silently to me. It isn't my mother's voice, or the voice of any person I can identify, certainly not my own. It is human, but inward, and it is inwardly that I listen to it. It is to me the voice of the story or the poem itself. The cadence, whatever it is that asks you to believe, the feeling that resides in the printed word, reaches me through the reader-voice. I have supposed, but never found out, that this is the case with all readers—to read as listeners—and with all writers, to write as listeners. It may be part of the desire to write. The sound of

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what falls on the page begins the process of testing it for truth, for me. Whether I am right to trust so far I don't know. By now I don't know whether I could do either one, reading or writing, without the other.

My own words, when I am at work on a story, I hear too as they go, in the same voice that I hear when I read in books. When I write and the sound of it comes back to my ears, then I act to make my changes. I have always trusted this voice.



1. What is the **main** purpose of the first three paragraphs?

- A to provide historical context
- B to establish the setting
- C to foreshadow later events
- D to introduce a central idea

2. Which techniques are demonstrated in the following sentence from the passage?

“That brass receptacle with a hole in the lid gave off a metallic smell like human sweat, from all the hot needles that were fed it.”

- A personification and simile
- B alliteration and assonance
- C symbolism and allusion
- D hyperbole and irony

3. What does Welty mean in the following sentence from paragraph four?

“The sound of what falls on the page begins the process of testing it for truth, for me.”

- A She believes her writing is effective if the words sound right.
- B If writing is honest and straightforward, then it is good.
- C The best writing includes descriptions of both sounds and sights.
- D She reviews all her writing to make sure it is accurate.

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4. What main idea is expressed in this passage?
- A the happiness of Welty's childhood
 - B the importance of parents in encouraging children's talents
 - C how knowledge of music makes one a better writer
 - D how writing requires a fine-tuned ear
5. Which **best** describes how this passage is organized?
- A argument/counterargument
 - B main idea/elaboration
 - C present action/flashback
 - D anecdote/larger point
6. What is the author's **main** purpose in writing this passage?
- A to show how her mother encouraged her writing
 - B to explain how she distinguishes good writing
 - C to provide instruction on how to write well
 - D to describe a significant childhood memory
7. Which word **best** describes Welty's style of writing?
- A leisurely
 - B blunt
 - C formal
 - D comic
8. What feature would Welty probably admire **most** in someone else's writing?
- A a sophisticated vocabulary
 - B a complicated plot
 - C a distinctive voice
 - D a clear message