

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

## Excerpt from "The Lotos-Eaters"

By Alfred, Lord Tennyson

1832

*Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892) was the Poet Laureate of Great Britain and Ireland during the Victorian period and remains one of the most popular British poets today. In this poem, inspired by a story from The Odyssey, a group of sailors experiences strange effects after eating the lotos flower. As you read, take notes on how eating the flower affects the sailors.*

- [1] The Lotos blooms below the barren peak:  
The Lotos blows by every winding creek:  
All day the wind breathes low with mellow  
tone:  
Thro' every hollow cave and alley lone
- [5] Round and round the spicy downs the yellow  
Lotos-dust is blown.  
We have had enough of action, and of motion  
we,  
Roll'd to starboard,<sup>1</sup> roll'd to larboard,<sup>2</sup> when  
the surge was seething free,  
Where the wallowing monster spouted his  
foam-fountains in  
Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an  
equal mind,
- [10] In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie  
reclined  
On the hills like Gods together, careless of  
mankind.  
For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts  
are hurl'd  
Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are lightly curl'd  
Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleaming world:
- [15] Where they smile in secret, looking over wasted lands,  
Blight<sup>3</sup> and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps and fiery sands,  
Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking ships, and praying hands.



*["W.E.F. Britten - The Early Poems of Alfred, Lord Tennyson - The Lotos-Eaters"](#) by William Edward Frank Britten (1848-1916) Adam Cuerden (restoration) is in the public domain.*

1. the right side of a forward-facing ship
2. an archaic term for a town or city with a harbor for ships
3. a plant disease

But they smile, they find a music centered in a doleful song  
Steaming up, a lamentation<sup>4</sup> and an ancient tale of wrong,  
[20] Like a tale of little meaning tho' the words are strong;  
Chanted from an ill-used race of men that cleave the soil,  
Sow the seed, and reap the harvest with enduring toil,  
Storing yearly little dues of wheat, and wine and oil;  
Till they perish and they suffer — some, 'tis whisper'd — down in hell  
[25] Suffer endless anguish, others in Elysian<sup>5</sup> valleys dwell,  
Resting weary limbs at last on beds of asphodel.<sup>6</sup>  
Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than toil, the shore  
Than labour in the deep mid-ocean, wind and wave and oar;  
Oh rest ye, brother mariners,<sup>7</sup> we will not wander more.

*"The Lotos-Eaters" by Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1832) is in the public domain.*

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4. **Lamentation** (*noun*) an expression of grief or sorrow
  5. relating to heaven or paradise
  6. an immortal flower that is said to exist in the Elysian fields
  7. sailors

## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: What is the meaning of "girdled" as it is used in line 14?
  - A. glowing
  - B. encircled
  - C. prominent
  - D. imprisoned
  
2. PART B: Which quotation helps clarify the meaning of "girdled"?
  - A. "On the hills like Gods together" (Line 11)
  - B. "the bolts are hurl'd / Far below" (Lines 12-13)
  - C. "the clouds are lightly curl'd / Round" (Lines 13-14)
  - D. "they smile in secret, looking over wasted lands" (Line 15)
  
3. PART A: How does the speaker develop over the course of the passage?
  - A. The speaker is initially eager for more adventure, but he quickly grows accustomed to a sedentary life in the land of the Lotos-eaters.
  - B. The speaker is initially enamored of the natural beauty of the land of the Lotos-eaters, but he then becomes critical of its inhabitants.
  - C. The speaker is initially homesick for his native land, but he eventually grows accustomed to a new life in the land of the Lotos-eaters.
  - D. The speaker is initially weary of traveling, but he then becomes weary of active life altogether after visiting the land of the Lotos-eaters.
  
4. PART B: Which TWO quotations provide the best support for the answer to Part A? Choose one answer from the first half of the passage and one answer from the second half of the passage.
  - A. "All day the wind breathes low with mellow tone" (Line 3, first half)
  - B. "We have had enough of action, and of motion we" (Line 6, first half)
  - C. "Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind" (Line 9, first half)
  - D. "But they smile, they find a music centred in a doleful song" (Line 18, second half)
  - E. "Sow the seed, and reap the harvest with enduring toil" (Line 22, second half)
  - F. "Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than toil" (Line 27, second half)

5. PART A: What effect does the phrase "wasted lands" in line 15 have on the structure of the passage as a whole?
- A. It recalls the image of the "barren peak," suggesting continuity with the description of the land of the Lotos-eaters. (Lines 1-14)
  - B. It signals a shift in focus, establishing a point of contrast with the description of the land of the Lotos-eaters. (Lines 1-14)
  - C. It foreshadows the fate of the individuals, who the speaker believes will "perish" and "suffer." (Line 24)
  - D. It introduces a digression, creating mystery and suspense until the speaker returns the focus to the land of the Lotos-eaters. (Line 27)
6. PART B: Which evidence further develops the effect indicated by the answer to Part A?
- A. the negative imagery of "famine, plague and earthquake" (Line 16)
  - B. the triple rhyme of "soil," "toil," and "oil" (Lines 21-23)
  - C. the use of assonance with "seed" and "reap" (Line 22)
  - D. the repetition of the word "surely" (Line 27)

