

Comparing Stories Across Forms and Genres

Name: _____

Date: _____

Score: _____ / 10



Quick Review

Two texts can be about the same idea but use different FORMS or GENRES (a poem and a story, a play scene and a short story, a myth and a modern tale). The same idea will SOUND different in each form — and each form does some jobs better than the other.

PART 1 — READ

Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

Two Versions of a First Performance

=== POEM: "Tuning" === Before the lights, before the rows / of folded chairs and held-in breath, / I press one finger to the string / and listen for the trembling truth. / The note I want is just behind / the note I have. I bend my hand, / not the string — because the string / is honest, and my hand is not. / Backstage, the others count their breaths. / I count the small uneven hum / inside my chest, and ask it, kindly, / to please be steady for one song. / When the curtain pulls itself apart / I will not be ready. I will play / the first note anyway, the way / a person opens a closed front door.

=== SHORT STORY: "The Quiet Before" === Backstage, six minutes before the spring concert began, Yumi held her violin against her chest the way she had once held a small, sleeping cat. The other seventh-grade musicians were practicing scales with their eyes closed, or pacing, or whispering to each other in tight, encouraging sentences. Yumi did neither. She stood very still, listened to the murmur of the audience seeping through the curtain, and tried to find the calm inside her own ribs. She had practiced the solo seventy-eight times in three weeks. She knew this because she had marked each run-through in pencil on the inside back cover of her music book. The seventy-eighth time, the day before, had been better than the first time. It had not been as good as the fifty-third time, which had felt, briefly, like flying. Yumi had not been able to repeat the fifty-third time, no matter how carefully she had tried, and she had finally understood that the goal was not to repeat it. The goal was to walk onto the stage anyway and play whatever number this time would turn out to be. Mr. Aldama, the conductor, walked past her without saying anything, but he tapped his music stand twice — a code that meant "two minutes." Yumi let out a long breath. The curtain in front of her, which had felt heavy for an hour, felt suddenly thin. She lifted her violin to her shoulder, set her bow on the string, and waited for the curtain to open and for the song to begin.

PART 2 — PRACTICE

Use BOTH the poem and the story to answer each question.



1. Both texts are MOST CLEARLY about —
 - A. a musician facing the final concert of her career.
 - B. a young performer in the quiet minutes BEFORE a performance begins.
 - C. the rivalry between two musicians who both want a solo.
 - D. the history of how concerts came to be held in school auditoriums.
2. Which idea is treated as a THEME in BOTH texts?
 - A. A musician must be perfect before stepping on stage.
 - B. Real readiness sometimes means playing the first note even when you do not feel ready.
 - C. Audiences are unkind to young performers who make mistakes.
 - D. The best performances always happen in the largest concert halls.
3. How are the FORMS of the two texts different?
 - A. The poem uses short lines, line breaks, and figurative language; the story uses paragraphs and full sentences with more concrete background details.
 - B. The poem tells a complete story with a beginning, middle, and end; the story is a list of facts.
 - C. The poem is non-fiction; the story is fiction.
 - D. The poem has dialogue; the story has none.
4. Which detail appears in the STORY but NOT in the poem?
 - A. the moment of waiting for a curtain to open
 - B. the speaker / Yumi's heartbeat or breath inside her chest
 - C. the specific number of times Yumi has practiced the solo
 - D. the comparison between feeling ready and feeling unready
5. Which detail appears in the POEM but NOT in the story?
 - A. the comparison of opening a song to "the way / a person opens a closed front door"
 - B. the curtain that will open at the start of the performance
 - C. the speaker's own breath or pulse before the music starts
 - D. the fact that the speaker is about to perform with other people
6. How does the STORY treat the idea of "the perfect run-through" differently from the poem?
 - A. The story claims the perfect run-through is impossible to plan for; the poem claims it is easy.
 - B. The story gives a concrete example — the fifty-third practice that "felt, briefly, like flying" — and shows that the goal is not to repeat it; the poem does not mention any specific past performance at all.
 - C. The story argues that practicing too much is wasteful; the poem argues that practicing too little is wasteful.
 - D. The story and the poem treat this idea in exactly the same way.



7. Which sentence BEST captures the DIFFERENT effects of the two forms on the reader?
- A. The poem makes the moment feel slower and more inward; the story makes the moment feel more grounded in specific details a reader can picture.
 - B. The poem makes the moment feel loud and chaotic; the story makes the moment feel quiet and slow.
 - C. Both texts make the moment feel exactly the same to the reader, with no difference in pace or detail.
 - D. The poem reads like a textbook chapter; the story reads like a song lyric.
8. Which line from the poem and which line from the story SHARE the same theme of acting without being ready?
- A. "Backstage, the others count their breaths." / "Mr. Aldama, the conductor, walked past her without saying anything."
 - B. "I will not be ready. I will play / the first note anyway, the way / a person opens a closed front door." / "the goal was to walk onto the stage anyway and play whatever number this time would turn out to be."
 - C. "I press one finger to the string / and listen for the trembling truth." / "She knew this because she had marked each run-through in pencil on the inside back cover of her music book."
 - D. "The note I want is just behind / the note I have." / "The curtain in front of her, which had felt heavy for an hour, felt suddenly thin."
9. The poem and the story share the theme of "playing the first note before you feel ready." In 3-4 sentences, explain how each FORM handles that theme differently. Use one detail from EACH text.

10. Which version — the poem or the short story — do YOU think delivers the theme of "playing anyway" more powerfully? Defend your answer with at least one specific detail from each text AND one reason about the form (poem vs. story).



Answer Keys

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| Explanations | |
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| 1. B | Poem: "Before the lights, before the rows"; Story: "six minutes before the spring concert began" — both texts sit in the same waiting moment. A is wrong (no final-career detail); C invents a rivalry; D is non-fiction territory neither text occupies. |
| 2. B | Poem: "I will not be ready. I will play / the first note anyway." Story: "the goal was to walk onto the stage anyway and play whatever number this time would turn out to be." — same theme, different forms. A is the OPPOSITE of both texts; C invents an unkind audience; D is wrong (the story is set in a school auditorium and the poem doesn't specify a hall). |
| 3. A | Poem: lined verse + figures ("the way / a person opens a closed front door"); Story: paragraphs + concrete biography (seventy-eight practice runs, the conductor's code). B reverses what each form does; C is wrong (both are literary, not documentary); D is wrong (the poem has no actual dialogue and the story has the tapped "two minutes" code). |
| 4. C | "Seventy-eight times in three weeks" is precise biography — exactly the kind of concrete detail prose does well, and exactly the kind a short poem usually leaves out. A appears in both texts; B appears in both ("the small uneven hum / inside my chest" / "find the calm inside her own ribs"); D is in both. |
| 5. A | The simile of opening a closed front door is in the poem only — the story does not use that figure. B appears in both; C appears in both; D appears in both (the poem mentions "the others" backstage). |
| 6. B | The story zooms in on the fifty-third run as a specific case and uses it to teach a lesson; the poem stays inside one waiting moment and never reaches back to a numbered practice. A misreads both; C invents arguments about practice; D contradicts the texts' clear differences. |
| 7. A | Poem's short, image-heavy lines pull the reader inside Yumi's chest; the story's paragraphs anchor the reader to a specific backstage with a specific conductor and a specific number of practices. B swaps the moods; C ignores the obvious form difference; D reverses the genres. |
| 8. B | Both quotes name the same act: play / walk on ANYWAY. A pairs setting details (no theme link); C pairs an early image with a counting habit; D pairs a different theme (the gap between what you have and what you want, then the curtain feeling thinner) — close, but not the act-without-being-ready idea. |



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| 9. | <p>Answer: Strong answers contrast HOW each form delivers the same idea. The poem compresses the idea into a single image — "I will play / the first note anyway, the way / a person opens a closed front door" — and lives inside the speaker's chest with very few outside details, letting the reader feel the moment quickly and intensely. The story gives the same idea a slower, more grounded explanation — Yumi has practiced seventy-eight times, the fifty-third "felt, briefly, like flying," and she finally understands that "the goal was not to repeat it. The goal was to walk onto the stage anyway and play whatever number this time would turn out to be." Acceptable variations: any answer that picks ONE detail from each text and names what the FORM is doing (poem = compression + image; story = concrete background + slower reflection). NOT acceptable: answers that just summarize both texts; answers that quote only one text; answers that claim the two texts are exactly the same. Each form does the theme a different way: the poem packs it into an image; the story lays it out with a specific example.</p> |
| 10. | <p>Answer: Strong answers pick ONE side and defend it with text + form reasoning. Sample (poem): The poem hits harder because it compresses the whole feeling into the simile "the way / a person opens a closed front door," which gives a small, ordinary image for a huge act of courage — short lines also force a reader to slow down, and the story's seventy-eight practice runs (although powerful) can distract from the central nerve. Sample (story): The story hits harder because the lesson is EARNED — Yumi has practiced seventy-eight times, has felt the fifty-third one fly, and has had to give up on repeating that night, so when she walks on "anyway," the reader has lived through every step; the poem's "I will not be ready. I will play / the first note anyway" feels true but lighter without that history. Either choice can earn full credit if the answer cites one specific detail from each text AND names a real reason connected to FORM. NOT acceptable: "both are good" with no choice; preferences with no quoted text; reasoning unconnected to form. Pick one. Then use one detail from each text AND one thing the form (verse vs. prose) does well to support your pick.</p> |



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