Word Choice, Figurative Language, and Tone

Name: _____	Date: _____	Score: _____ / 10

Quick Review

Grade 7 readers analyze both denotation (the dictionary meaning) and connotation (the feeling a word carries). Watch for repeated words, surprising metaphors, and small sound effects — they shape tone (how the writer feels about what is happening), which is not the same as mood (how the reader feels).

PART 1 — READ

Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

The Late Bus

The activities bus that left East Ridge Middle School at 5:18 each weekday was, in Hosanna's exact words, "a small portable kingdom of regret." The kids who rode it had stayed late for one of two reasons — they had wanted to (band, robotics, intramurals) or they had not (detention, makeup tests, the kind of "talk" with a teacher that everyone called a talk and no one experienced as a conversation). Hosanna, who rode the late bus most days because of robotics, called the bus the kingdom because it had its own rules, its own ruler (Mr. Lambert, the driver, who tolerated noise but not movement), and its own slow, unhurried, almost royal way of taking the long way home.

On the kind of October afternoon when the maples along Route 7 looked as if someone had set them on fire and then forgotten about them, Hosanna boarded the bus to find the back row already occupied by a seventh-grader she had never seen before. The girl was very small, very still, and very obviously trying not to cry. Hosanna slid into the row in front of her and pretended, with great care, to look out the window. "That maple," she said quietly, to no one in particular, "is showing off again." A small, watery laugh came from the back row. Hosanna did not turn around. She let the laugh be private.

Mr. Lambert pulled out of the school lot at exactly 5:18, which he always did, and turned onto Route 7. The bus rumbled, complained, sighed, and rumbled again — Hosanna had once told her brother that the bus had four moods and used them in order. The new girl in the back row sniffed once. "What was the talk about?" Hosanna asked the window. There was a long pause. Then a small voice said, "I forgot my speech. Like, in front of everyone. I just — forgot." Hosanna nodded at the maples. "They're going to make you do it again next week, aren't they?" she said. "Yeah," said the voice. "I know," said Hosanna. "I forgot mine in fifth grade. The world keeps spinning. The maples keep showing off. It's annoying, honestly." The laugh from the back row was a little louder this time.

By the time the bus reached Cedar Lane, where Hosanna got off, the new girl had moved up one row. They had not exchanged names. They had agreed, however, that Mr. Lambert was not a man so much as a series of unwritten rules wearing a windbreaker; that maples were show-offs; and that being forgotten by the world for a few minutes was, in fact, the gift you most needed after the world had watched you for too long. "I'm Hosanna," Hosanna said as she stood. "Imani," said the girl in the back. Hosanna stepped off the bus. The doors closed with their familiar long, slow sigh, and the activities bus, that small portable kingdom of regret, continued its unhurried, almost royal way down Route 7.

PART 2 — PRACTICE

Use the passage to answer each question. Pay attention to specific word choices and figurative language.

1. Hosanna calls the bus "a small portable kingdom of regret." This metaphor MOST CLEARLY suggests that the bus —

A. is a luxurious, beautifully decorated vehicle.

B. is a self-contained little world full of disappointment but also a strange dignity.

C. is in danger of breaking down on Route 7.

D. has been renamed by the school district recently.

2. Read the line: "The maples along Route 7 looked as if someone had set them on fire and then forgotten about them." The figurative comparison MOST LIKELY does what for the passage's tone?

A. It creates a feeling of physical danger and urgency.

B. It creates a vivid, slightly dreamlike autumn image that matches the slow, almost royal mood of the bus.

C. It proves that there has been an actual fire along Route 7.

D. It shows that the writer dislikes maple trees in October.

3. Hosanna says of the maple, "That maple is showing off again." The word "showing off" carries a CONNOTATION of —

A. being dangerous and threatening to other trees on the road.

B. being beautiful in a way that is so noticeable it feels almost playful or vain.

C. being deeply ashamed of its own appearance.

D. being sick and dropping its leaves earlier than other trees.

4. Read: "The bus rumbled, complained, sighed, and rumbled again." The writer's choice to give the bus the human actions of complaining and sighing is —

A. personification, used to give the bus its own personality and to match Hosanna's idea that the bus has "four moods."

B. a simile, used to compare the bus directly to a person.

C. alliteration, used to make the line easier to memorize.

D. hyperbole, used to exaggerate how dangerous the bus is.

5. What is the OVERALL TONE of the passage?

A. bitter and angry, as though the writer dislikes the bus and the people on it.

B. warm and gently amused, as though the writer treats small daily struggles with kindness and humor.

C. frightened and tense, as though something bad is about to happen on Route 7.

D. cold and businesslike, as though the writer is reporting facts for a newspaper.

6. What does the REPETITION of "rumbled, complained, sighed, and rumbled again" most clearly do?

A. It bores the reader on purpose so they will skip to the dialogue.

B. It creates a rhythm that imitates the slow, uneven motion of the bus AND introduces the idea that the bus has moods.

C. It proves that the bus is mechanically broken and unsafe.

D. It hides the fact that Hosanna is not really paying attention.

7. Read: "Mr. Lambert was not a man so much as a series of unwritten rules wearing a windbreaker." This metaphor MOST STRONGLY suggests that Mr. Lambert is —

A. a young driver who cannot enforce any of the bus rules.

B. more known to the students by his predictable rules than by his personal warmth.

C. an angry man who shouts at the students every afternoon.

D. a substitute driver who started this week.

8. Hosanna says, "Being forgotten by the world for a few minutes was, in fact, the gift you most needed after the world had watched you for too long." Which earlier word choice MOST DIRECTLY supports this line?

A. "a small portable kingdom of regret"

B. Hosanna deciding to "let the laugh be private" — choosing not to turn around when the watery laugh comes from the back row.

C. the maples along Route 7 "looked as if someone had set them on fire"

D. Mr. Lambert tolerated noise but not movement.

9. Find ONE specific phrase or sentence in the passage where the writer's WORD CHOICE creates feeling — through figurative language, connotation, or sound. Quote it, name what kind of word-work it does (metaphor, simile, personification, connotation, repetition), and explain in 1-2 sentences what FEELING it creates.

_____

_____

10. How does Hosanna's word choice in the lines about her own fifth-grade forgotten speech ("The world keeps spinning. The maples keep showing off. It's annoying, honestly.") affect the TONE of the conversation with Imani? Use one specific phrase to support your answer.

_____

_____

Answer Keys

1	A	**B**	C	D	6	A	**B**	C	D
2	A	**B**	C	D	7	A	**B**	C	D
3	A	**B**	C	D	8	A	**B**	C	D
4	**A**	B	C	D	9	See below			
5	A	**B**	C	D	10	See below			

Explanations

1. B	"Kingdom" gives the bus rules and a ruler; "regret" colors it with disappointment; "portable" makes it small and self-contained — three ideas the metaphor stacks together. A reads "kingdom" too literally; C invents danger; D invents a renaming.
2. B	"Set on fire and forgotten" is a striking image, but the comparison's tone is unhurried and slightly amused — it matches the bus's pace. A literalizes "fire"; C reads the simile as fact; D reverses the affection in "showing off again."
3. B	"Showing off" is playful — the maple is dressed up too brightly and is being teased for it. A overreads danger; C reverses the feeling; D adds a medical layer the passage never gives.
4. A	Bus + human verbs (complain, sigh) = classic personification, and the line explicitly ties to Hosanna's four-moods comment. B is the wrong term (no "like" or "as"); C is the wrong term (no repeated initial sounds); D invents danger.
5. B	Word choices like "showing off," "a series of unwritten rules wearing a windbreaker," and the line "It's annoying, honestly" stack a warm, amused tone. A reverses the feeling; C reads danger into a slow ride home; D ignores the figures of speech.
6. B	Four verbs in order = a beat that sounds like a bus pulling out, AND each verb is a mood. A misreads repetition as filler; C invents mechanical danger; D contradicts Hosanna's careful observation.
7. B	"A series of unwritten rules wearing a windbreaker" puts the RULES first and the person second — that is the character note. A reverses the strictness; C overreads (he tolerates noise); D invents biography.
8. B	Letting the laugh be private IS Hosanna giving Imani exactly the "forgotten by the world for a few minutes" she names later — same idea in action. A is the bus name, not the private-watching idea; C is the tree image; D is the driver's rule.
9.	**Answer:** Strong answers quote a clear example, name the type, and name the feeling. Examples: metaphor — "a small portable kingdom of regret" creates a feeling of self-contained disappointment with a strange, gentle dignity; simile — "maples...as if someone had set them on fire and then forgotten about them" creates a vivid, slightly dreamlike autumn feeling; personification — "the bus rumbled, complained, sighed, and rumbled again" creates a feeling that the bus has moods, matching the slow, weary ride home; connotation — "showing off again" gives the maple a playful, vain quality, matching the warm tone of the passage; repetition — "the maples keep showing off" plus the closing line about the bus's "unhurried, almost royal way" creates a circling, settled rhythm. NOT acceptable: a literal sentence with no figurative work; a quote with the wrong type; a quote without a feeling named. Pick a line that compares two unlike things OR gives a non-human thing a human action OR repeats a word on purpose. Then ask: what feeling do those words pile up?

10.	**Answer:** Strong answers explain that the word choice makes the moment kind without making it sentimental — "It's annoying, honestly" turns the embarrassment into a small shared joke, which lowers Imani's shame and lets her laugh more easily. The reuse of "maples keep showing off" connects this conversation to Hosanna's earlier line and to the larger tone of the passage (warm, gently amused). Acceptable variations: any answer that names the tone (warm/wry/amused/kind) AND quotes a phrase that creates it. NOT acceptable: answers that say the tone is angry or scary; answers without a quote; answers that summarize the scene without naming a feeling. Look at what Hosanna does NOT say. She does not say "I know exactly how you feel." She says something funnier. Why does the funnier version work?

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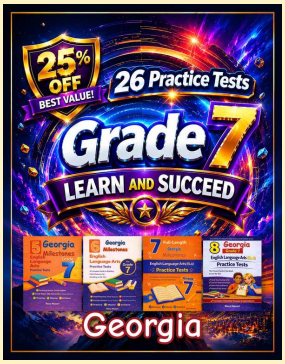

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