

Instructions: Annotate the poem below. Answer text-dependent questions. Write ONE of the three constructed responses.

When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer

BY WALT WHITMAN

When I heard the learn'd astronomer,
When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me,
When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add, divide, and measure them,
When I sitting heard the astronomer where he lectured with much applause in the lecture-room,
How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,
Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself,
In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,
Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.

Text-Dependent Questions

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

1. Which of the following best describes a theme of the poem?
 - a. Astronomy is an important study because it blends mathematics and science.
 - b. Human beings are not intelligent enough to truly understand the wonders of the world.
 - c. In order to be a respected expert in a field of study, one must study in a school.
 - d. A person should rely on his/her own thinking instead of feeling pressure to conform.
2. Which of the following quotes best supports the answer to #1?
 - a. "the figures, were ranged in columns before me" (Line 2)
 - b. "he lectured with much applause in the lecture-room" (Line 4)
 - c. "Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself" (Line 6)
 - d. "Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars" (Line 8)
3. In the poem, why does the speaker leave the lecture hall?
 - a. The speaker becomes annoyed with space and the night-sky after listening to the lecture.
 - b. The speaker becomes physically ill and slips out of the lecture hall during the applause.
 - c. The speaker does not care for the astronomer's clinical observation of the stars.
 - d. The speaker is excited about the lecture and wants to test the astronomer's theories.
4. What does the term "mystical" reveal about the speaker?
 - a. The speaker believes in the supernatural and rejects science.
 - b. The speaker views nature as magical and is in awe of it.
 - c. The word has a deep connection with space bordering on worship.
 - d. The word makes the speaker seem somewhat delusional and strange.

Constructed Response #1:

How does the free verse structure reflect the central theme of the poem? Cite evidence from the poem to support your answer.

Constructed Response #2:

Do you agree with the message of the poem? Why or why not?

Constructed Response #3:

In the context of this poem, what are the costs and benefits of technology? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.