

Threads & Themes Grade 6, Unit 1,

Investigation 1 Summative Assessment (Teacher Edition)

Focus Standards: RL.6.1, RL.6.2, RL.6.3, RL.6.4, RL.6.5, RL.6.6, L.6.1.a, L.6.1.e, L.6.5.a, L.6.5.b

PASSAGE 1

“Still Water” — Lexile: 1000L | Literary

(1) By the fifth day at Mémère’s house, Celine had run out of things to do. She had opened every kitchen drawer, traced the hallway photographs with her eyes until she had memorized their order, and sat on the back porch counting the boats tied up along the bayou. She had also discovered, early on, that the cell service disappeared past the back steps (not weakened, just up and gone), which meant the only thing her phone was good for now was the time. So when her grandmother appeared in the doorway at seven o’clock, still in her garden clothes and smelling of basil and turned soil, and said simply, “Come sit with me,” Celine tucked her phone away and followed.

(2) The dock behind Mémère’s house ran out over the water on weathered gray pilings, a little soft underfoot near the middle. The bayou was wide and slow, dark as strong tea, and the surface caught the last of the evening light the way still things do. Cypress trees crowded the far bank, their roots rising from the water in tangled rows, and somewhere deeper in the reeds the bullfrogs had begun their long, unhurried refrain. Mémère settled into her chair at the end of the dock without looking behind herself to confirm it was there. She always knew where her things were.

(3) The light shifted. Celine sat beside her grandmother and tried to think of something worth saying. She pulled her knees to her chest and watched a great blue heron move along the far bank in slow, deliberate steps. She thought about the group chat she couldn’t read. She thought about the show she was three episodes behind on, about Houston, about the fact that this was supposed to feel like a vacation. The bayou lay between her and her life back home. Patient and unmoving, the bayou was a wide and unhurried thing. It had been here long before she arrived and would be here long after she left.

(4) Her grandmother watched the water silently with her hands folded in her lap. This was the way she did most things—without hurry, without any sign she wished she were somewhere else. A pair of egrets lifted from the rushes across the bayou and rose slowly against the bruised evening sky, like two letters carried off by the wind. Celine watched them until they crossed the tree line and disappeared.

(5) “Mémère,” she said. “What are we doing out here?”

(6) Her grandmother glanced over at her, then back at the water. “Watching,” she said.

(7) “Watching what?”

(8) Mémère’s mouth turned up at the corners. Her eyes sparkled. “Does it have to be something in particular?”

(9) Celine almost said yes. She almost said she could name ten better ways to use the hour before dinner. But the way her grandmother asked, not teasing, not impatient, just genuinely curious about the answer, held her back. She looked where Mémère was looking: at the long, low surface of the bayou where the light had spread itself thin and gold.

(10) After a while, Mémère spoke again. “Your mother used to ask me that exact same question,” she said. Her voice was the same temperature as the air. It was warm, without urgency. “Every summer she came here. And then somewhere in the second week, she would stop asking.”

(11) Celine held that for a moment. She thought about her mother standing at the kitchen window back home in Houston, looking out at the neighbor’s fence for reasons Celine had never been able to figure out. She had always assumed her mother was just tired. She was not sure now that was all it was.

(12) She did not say anything else. She looked at the bayou, and for the first time since she had arrived, she was not counting the minutes. The water held the last light in slow, dark ribbons, and Celine held still inside it. When Mémère finally rose to go inside, Celine stayed on her own for another moment—not because she had decided to, but because something in her had not finished yet.

ITEMS — PASSAGE 1

Item 1 — RL.6.4, L.6.5.a | Figurative language: simile and metaphor | DOK 1 | Sorting

Sort each quote from the passage into the correct category.

Category 1: Simile

Category 2: Metaphor

- A) “dark as strong tea”
- B) “the bayou was a wide and unhurried thing”
- C) “like two letters carried off by the wind”
- D) “the bayou lay between her and her life back home”

Item 2 — RL.6.4, L.6.5.a | Word choice: personification shapes meaning (para 3) | DOK 2 | MC

Read this sentence from “Still Water.”

She had also discovered, early on, that the cell service disappeared past the back steps (not weakened, just up and gone), which meant the only thing her phone was good for now was the time.

How do the words “disappeared” and “just up and gone” affect the meaning of the passage?

- A) They use imagery to describe the exact location of the back steps and help the reader visualize the setting.
- B) They use imagery to help the reader clearly picture the lack of cell signal once Celine stepped away from the house.
- C) They use personification to show the cell service is physically moving away from the house, explaining how signals travel in rural areas.

D) They use personification to suggest the cell service leaves suddenly and completely, emphasizing Celine’s disconnection from her usual life.

Item 3 — RL.6.1 | Evidence: Celine questioning stillness (paras 6–9) | DOK 2 | TEI — Multi-Select

Select the TWO details from paragraphs 6 through 9 that BEST show how Celine’s thinking is beginning to change.

- A) “Watching what?”
- B) “Does it have to be something in particular?”
- C) “Mémère’s mouth turned up at the corners. Her eyes sparkled.”
- E) “She almost said she could name ten better ways to use the hour before dinner.”
- D) “She looked where Mémère was looking: at the long, low surface of the bayou where the light had spread itself thin and gold.”

Item 4 — RL.6.3 | Character: what paras 10–11 reveal about Celine | DOK 3 | MC

What does Celine realize about her mother as a result of the conversation with Mémère?

- A) She realizes that her mother may have appreciated quiet moments and reflection more than she had thought.
- B) She realizes that her mother preferred spending time at Mémère’s house rather than at home in Houston.
- C) She realizes that her mother spent more time watching the bayou each summer during her visits than Mémère had.
- D) She realizes that her mother was bored when she stood at the window at home rather than tired as she had thought.

Item 5 — RL.6.6 | Point of view: Celine’s arc across passage | DOK 3 | MC

How does Celine’s point of view change from the beginning to the end of “Still Water”?

- A) She begins feeling connected to the bayou and ends feeling out of place in her grandmother’s world.
- B) She begins happy to visit her grandmother and ends wishing she were back in Houston with her mother.
- C) She begins restless and disconnected from the bayou and ends more patient and willing to sit with the experience.
- D) She begins focused on using her phone and ends with a greater appreciation for the natural beauty of the bayou.

Item 6 — RL.6.2 | Summary: objective summary of passage | DOK 2 | MC

Which statement BEST summarizes “Still Water”?

- A) Mémère worries that Celine will never slow down and decides to tell her a story about her mother to help her change.
- B) Celine spends time with her grandmother on the dock and starts to understand why her mother enjoyed visiting each summer.
- C) Mémère encourages Celine to slow down and notice the quiet beauty of the bayou, leading Celine to begin appreciating her surroundings.

D) Celine reluctantly joins her grandmother on the dock, resists sitting still, and gradually becomes present after her grandmother shares a memory about her mother.

Item 7 — RL.6.2 | Theme: theme passage develops | DOK 3 | MC

What theme does “Still Water” MOST clearly develop?

- A) Slowing down and paying attention to the present can lead to deeper understanding.
- B) Family traditions matter most when people are far from home and the world they know.
- C) Nature teaches patience to those who are willing to spend time observing it carefully and consistently.
- D) Older people have more wisdom than younger people, and listening to them helps young people grow up faster.

Item 8 — L.6.1.a | Pronoun antecedent: she (para 10) | DOK 1 | MC

Read these sentences from “Still Water.”

“Your mother used to ask me that exact same question . . . Every summer she came here. And then somewhere in the second week, she would stop asking.”

To whom does she refer in this sentence?

- A) Celine, because she is the main character of the passage
- B) Celine’s mother, because Mémère is speaking about her daughter’s childhood visits
- C) Mémère, because she is the one speaking in this paragraph
- D) Mémère’s mother, who used to visit the bayou before Celine was born

PASSAGE 2

“Saturday at Ray’s” — Lexile: 840L | Literary | Below band due to dialogue density and conversational register

(1) The shop was busy when Justin walked in. His uncle Ray was finishing a cut at the first chair; another barber, Lorenzo, worked at the second. The television above the door was going, and somebody’s playlist drifted underneath it all—that old R&B that Ray always played on Saturdays because, he said, “Saturdays deserve something real.” The place smelled the way it always had: clippers, aftershave, some coffee burning on a hotplate. Justin knew it as the particular warmth of somewhere people came to settle in for a while. He dropped into a waiting chair near the window and took out his phone. There was nothing on it he actually wanted to see, but it had become habit. Looking at it was easier than looking at anything else.

(2) Ray caught his eye in the mirror. “Nephew.” That was all—just the word, the way Ray said most things, as if it were the opening of a sentence he hadn’t yet decided to complete—and Justin lifted his chin in acknowledgment before dropping his eyes back to his phone.

(3) The man in Ray’s chair was Mr. Edmonds, someone Justin had known his whole life without really knowing him, except that he came every other Saturday and always asked for the same thing. Mr. Edmonds was asking about Ray’s son now, a boy Justin’s age who went to a different school. Ray answered without looking up from his clippers. “He’s doing good. Works hard. Gets in his own way sometimes, but that’s just being thirteen.”

(4) Mr. Edmonds laughed low. “Ain’t that the truth.”

(5) “Every last one of them,” Ray said, chuckling. “Can’t tell ’em nothing they don’t already know.”

(6) Justin looked out the window at the street. Two older men were bent over the folding chess table that appeared on the corner every Saturday without anyone seeming to set it up or take it down. A woman jogged past with a dog that stopped to investigate every crack in the sidewalk, unbothered by her impatience. A delivery truck idled at the curb and swallowed the rest of the view while the driver consulted his route sheet. The ordinary business of a Saturday on this block, the same as it was every week. Justin observed without registering any of it. He had been watching things without seeing them for days now, ever since Darius had said what he said at lunch, and Justin had acted like it didn’t bother him when it did.

(7) Mr. Edmonds climbed down from the chair, paid, and took his time buttoning his jacket. When the door finally swung shut behind him, Ray swept the floor once and turned the chair toward Justin. “You up.”

(8) Justin sat down. Ray snapped the cape out and settled it around him. In the mirror, Justin’s face looked like a face waiting for something to be over.

(9) “Same?” Ray said.

(10) “Yeah.”

(11) Ray picked up his clippers and worked in concentrated silence. The line along Justin’s temple came in clean and straight. Then Ray said, without making it a thing: “You want to tell me what’s going on, or you want me to act like I don’t see it?”

(12) Justin shrugged. “Nothing’s going on.”

(13) “All right,” Ray said. He kept working. Another full minute passed.

(14) “You know what I notice about people who say nothing’s wrong? They always got real specific nothing’s.”

(15) Justin didn’t answer. He sat with that for the rest of the cut—the specific nothing that had a name, that wore Darius’s face, that had been taking up space in his chest for three days like when he tried to fit something extra in his backpack and it wouldn’t zip up. When he stepped down from the chair and zipped his jacket, he stopped on the sidewalk outside and stood still for a moment in the ordinary noise of the street. He put his phone in his pocket without opening it. Then he turned right back into the barbershop—not because he needed Uncle Ray’s advice, but because going without it was worse than going it alone.

ITEMS — PASSAGE 2

Item 9 — RL.6.1 | Evidence: Justin mentally distracted (para 6) | DOK 2 | MC

Which detail from paragraphs 1 and 2 BEST shows that Justin is trying to avoid paying attention to what is happening around him?

A) Justin drops into a waiting chair near the window.

- B) Justin takes out his phone even though there was nothing to see.
- C) Justin notices the familiar sounds and smells.
- D) Justin lifts his chin to acknowledge Ray before looking away again.

Item 10 — RL.6.5 | Structure: function of paras 3-5 | DOK 2 | MC

How does the conversation between Ray and Mr. Edmonds in paragraphs 3 through 5 contribute to the plot of the story?

- A) It shows that Ray does not notice Justin has arrived, which creates tension that causes Justin to not want to talk to Ray.
- B) It introduces Ray’s understanding of thirteen-year-olds before he addresses Justin directly, preparing the reader for how Ray will approach him.
- C) It reveals that Ray’s son and Justin share the same problem, so the reader understands Ray already knows what to do.
- D) It establishes that the barbershop is a social gathering place, which makes Justin think of his conversation with Darius.

Item 11 — L.6.1.e | Informal language: ain’t and ‘em (paras 16–17) | DOK 2 | MC

Read this passage from “Saturday at Ray’s.”

Mr. Edmonds laughed low. “Ain’t that the truth.”

“Every last one of them,” Ray said, chuckling. “Can’t tell ‘em nothing they don’t already know.”

What does the use of the word ‘em reveal about the way Ray speaks in the barbershop?

- A) Ray uses informal language because he wants to correct the way Mr. Edmonds speaks.
- B) Ray changes the way he speaks depending on how much he likes the person he’s speaking with.
- C) Ray uses informal language that fits the comfortable, familiar atmosphere of the barbershop.
- D) Ray changes the way he speaks depending on whether he is talking to adults or to young people.

Item 12 — L.6.5.b | Word relationship: observed / registering (para 18) | DOK 2 | MC

Read this sentence from “Saturday at Ray’s.”

Justin observed without registering any of it.

What is the relationship between the words observed and registering in this sentence?

- A) They suggest Justin is too far from the window to see the activity on the street clearly.
- B) They describe two actions Justin performs at the same time as he looks out at the street.
- C) They show that Justin is watching the street carefully in order to understand what he sees.
- D) They show that Justin is seeing the street with his eyes but not processing it with his mind.

Item 13 — RL.6.6 | Point of view: Ray’s POV conveyed indirectly | DOK 2 | MC

How does the author convey Ray’s point of view toward Justin in paragraphs 11 through 14?

- A) By having Ray stop cutting Justin’s hair, showing that he is frustrated with Justin for not answering his question honestly the first time
- B) By having Ray ask Justin a direct question, showing that Ray believes Justin should talk about his problems with adults
- C) By having Ray keep working quietly after Justin denies anything is wrong, showing that Ray is patient and observant with Justin
- D) By having Ray make a general comment about people, showing he believes Justin’s problem is similar to his son’s

Item 14 — L.6.5.a, RL.6.4 | Figurative language: simile (para 27) | DOK 2 | MC

Read this sentence from “Saturday at Ray’s.”

He sat with that for the rest of the cut—the specific nothing that had a name, that wore Darius’s face, that had been taking up space in his chest for three days like when he tried to fit something extra in his backpack and it wouldn’t zip up.

What does the underlined phrase suggest about how Justin feels?

- A) Justin feels relieved because he has finally found a way to explain what is bothering him.
- B) Justin feels weighed down by something he cannot ignore or push aside, no matter what he tries.
- C) Justin feels confused because he cannot figure out why Darius’s words upset him so much.
- D) Justin feels regret because he knows he said the wrong thing to Darius and cannot take it back.

Item 15 — RL.6.3 | Character: Justin’s final action | DOK 3 | MC

What does Justin’s decision to turn back into the barbershop at the end of paragraph 15 MOST reveal about his character?

- A) He would rather reach out for help than face his problem by himself.
- B) He believes Ray’s advice will solve his problem with Darius once and for all.
- C) He feels sad about the conversation with Darius and wants to distract himself.
- D) He feels uncomfortable leaving without saying anything and doesn’t want to be rude.

SPELLING

Administrator note: In digital administration, the platform reads each word and sentence aloud automatically. In print administration, the teacher reads the Word / Sentence / Repeat script aloud for each item, and students write the word on the blank line provided.

Item 16 — Spelling | Spelling | DOK 1 | FITB

unsettled

When Celine first arrived at Mémère’s house, she was **unsettled** because nothing around her was familiar.

unsettled

Write the spelling word you heard:

Item 17 — Spelling | Spelling | DOK 1 | FITB

authentic

Ray's advice felt **authentic** because it came without pressure or pretending.

authentic

Write the spelling word you heard:

Item 18 — Spelling | Spelling | DOK 1 | FITB

empathy

Mémère showed **empathy** by sitting beside her in silence rather than telling her what to feel.

empathy

Write the spelling word you heard:

Item 19 — Spelling | Spelling | DOK 1 | FITB

explicit

Ray did not give Justin **explicit** instructions—he made one quiet observation and left the rest unsaid.

explicit

Write the spelling word you heard:

Item 20 — Spelling | Spelling | DOK 1 | FITB

implicit

Even though she said nothing, Mémère's **implicit** invitation was that sitting still was worth the effort.

implicit

Write the spelling word you heard:

ANSWER KEY

#	Answer	Standard	Skill	DOK	Type
1	Simile: A and C; Metaphor: B and D	RL.6.4, L.6.5.a	Figurative language: simile and metaphor	1	TEI – Sorting
2	D	RL.6.4, L.6.5.a	Word choice: personification and imagery (para 3)	2	MC
3	D and E	RL.6.1	Evidence: Celine questioning stillness (paras 6–9)	2	TEI – Multi-Select
4	A	RL.6.3	Character: what paras 10–11 reveal about Celine	3	MC
5	C	RL.6.6	Point of view: Celine's arc across passage	3	MC
6	D	RL.6.2	Summary: objective summary of passage	2	MC
7	A	RL.6.2	Theme: theme passage develops	3	MC
8	B	L.6.1.a	Pronoun antecedent: she (para 10)	1	MC
9	B	RL.6.1	Evidence: Justin mentally distracted	2	MC
10	B	RL.6.5	Structure: function of paras 15–17	2	MC
11	C	L.6.1.e	Informal language: ain't and 'em	2	MC
12	D	L.6.5.b	Word relationship: observed / registering (para 18)	2	MC
13	C	RL.6.6	Point of view: Ray's POV conveyed indirectly (paras 23–26)	2	MC
14	B	L.6.5.a, RL.6.4	Figurative language: simile (para 27)	2	MC
15	A	RL.6.3	Character: what Justin's final action reveals (para 27)	3	MC
16	unsettled	Spelling	Spelling	1	FITB
17	authentic	Spelling	Spelling	1	FITB
18	empathy	Spelling	Spelling	1	FITB
19	explicit	Spelling	Spelling	1	FITB
20	implicit	Spelling	Spelling	1	FITB

RATIONALE APPENDIX

Passage 1 Rationales

Item 1 — L.6.5

Category 1: Simile

A) “dark as strong tea”: This is a simile because it uses the word “as” to directly compare the bayou’s color to strong tea.

C) “like two letters carried off by the wind”: This is a simile because it uses “like” to compare the egrets flying away to letters being carried by the wind.

Category 2: Metaphor

B) “the bayou was a wide and unhurried thing”: This is a metaphor because it directly describes the bayou as “unhurried,” giving it a human quality without using “like” or “as,” creating an implied comparison.

D) “the bayou lay between her and her life back home”: This is a metaphor because it presents the bayou as a barrier between Celine and her life, suggesting emotional and psychological distance without using “like” or “as.”

Item 2 — RL.6.4

✗ Incorrect: A) This response focuses on setting description, but the reference to the back steps is not meant to help the reader visualize the scene. Instead, it shows where the connection ends, reinforcing the idea of disconnection.

✗ Incorrect: B) This option misidentifies the effect as imagery. The sentence does not create a strong sensory picture; instead, it uses figurative language to convey the sudden loss of connection.

✗ Incorrect: C) This option incorrectly treats the figurative language as a literal explanation of how signals move. The sentence is not explaining a physical process; it emphasizes the sudden loss of connection.

✓ Correct: D) The words “disappeared” and “just up and gone” give the cell service humanlike behavior, suggesting it leaves suddenly and completely. This emphasizes how fully Celine is cut off from her usual, technology-filled life and highlights her disconnection.

Item 3 — RL.6.1

✗ Incorrect: A) This question reflects Celine’s initial mindset that there should be a specific purpose to watching, reinforcing her belief rather than showing a shift in it.

✗ Incorrect: B) While Mémère’s question encourages reflection, it does not directly show Celine questioning her own belief; it reflects the grandmother’s perspective instead.

✗ Incorrect: C) This detail focuses on Mémère’s expression and does not provide evidence of Celine’s changing thoughts.

✓ Correct: D) This detail reveals Celine’s internal conflict. Although she still believes there are better ways to spend her time, she pauses and does not say it. This hesitation shows she is beginning to question her assumption and consider a different perspective.

✓ Correct: E) This moment shows Celine beginning to shift her focus. Instead of thinking about what else she could be doing, she looks at the bayou and notices its details. This indicates she is starting to engage in simply observing, which challenges her belief that doing nothing is a waste of time.

Item 4 — RL.6.3

- ✓ **Correct: A)** After hearing that her mother used to ask the same question and then stopped, Celine reconsiders her earlier assumption. She begins to understand that her mother may have valued quiet moments and reflection, similar to what she is starting to experience.
- ✗ **Incorrect: B)** This choice shifts the focus to location, but the passage does not suggest that her mother preferred one place over another. Celine is rethinking her mother's behavior, not where she liked to spend time.
- ✗ **Incorrect: C)** This option introduces a comparison about how much time her mother spent watching the bayou, which is not stated in the text. It focuses on a detail that is not supported rather than Celine's changing understanding.
- ✗ **Incorrect: D)** This choice reflects an alternative explanation, but it does not match the shift in Celine's thinking. The passage shows her moving away from simple explanations like tiredness or boredom toward a deeper understanding of her mother's behavior.

Item 5 — RL.6.6

- ✗ **Incorrect: A)** This choice reverses her experience. Celine does not begin feeling connected to the bayou; she starts out disengaged and only gradually becomes more comfortable in her grandmother's world.
- ✗ **Incorrect: B)** This option is not supported by the text. Although Celine thinks about Houston at first, she does not end the passage wishing to return; instead, she becomes more present in her surroundings.
- ✓ **Correct: C)** At the beginning, Celine is bored and restless, looking for things to do and thinking about her phone and life back home. By the end, she is able to sit quietly, observe the bayou, and remain even after her grandmother leaves, showing she has become more patient and open to the experience.
- ✗ **Incorrect: D)** While Celine does stop using her phone and begins to notice the bayou, this choice overemphasizes the phone and focuses mainly on appreciating nature rather than her broader shift toward patience and stillness.

Item 6 — RL.6.2

- ✗ **Incorrect: A)** This option overstates Mémère's intentions. The passage does not show that she is worried or that she deliberately tells the story to change Celine; her actions are more natural and understated.
- ✗ **Incorrect: B)** This choice is partially accurate but incomplete. While Celine does begin to better understand her mother, the summary leaves out her initial resistance and the gradual change in her behavior.
- ✗ **Incorrect: C)** This option focuses on Mémère's influence and the setting but does not fully capture Celine's internal change or the role of the memory about her mother in shaping the plot.
- ✓ **Correct: D)** This choice best captures the full progression of the story. It includes Celine's initial reluctance, her resistance to sitting still, and her gradual shift in perspective after hearing about her mother. It reflects both the plot and Celine's character development.

Item 7 — RL.6.2

- ✓ **Correct: A)** As Celine slows down and observes the bayou, she gains a deeper understanding of the moment and her mother, showing that being present leads to insight.
- ✗ **Incorrect: B)** The passage does not develop a theme about family traditions. Celine's connection to her Houston life is a starting condition, not the central idea.
- ✗ **Incorrect: C)** While the bayou is present throughout, Mémère does not frame the experience as a practice of daily nature observation. The theme concerns presence and belonging, not consistent watching.

✗ Incorrect: D) The passage does not claim older people are universally wiser or that listening accelerates growing up. This overgeneralizes into a cliché the text does not support.

Item 8 — L.6.1

✗ Incorrect: A) Celine is the main character, but in paragraph 10, Mémère is speaking about a different person—her own daughter, who visited as a child. “She” refers to Mémère’s daughter, not the person Mémère is addressing.

✓ Correct: B) Mémère says “Your mother used to ask me that exact same question” immediately before the quoted sentence. The pronoun “she” refers back to “your mother”—the antecedent established in the prior sentence. Students identify the antecedent by reading the sentence in full context.

✗ Incorrect: C) Mémère is the speaker, not the subject of the pronoun. Pronouns in dialogue do not typically refer to the speaker unless the grammar clearly signals it, and here the context points to Celine’s mother.

✗ Incorrect: D) Mémère’s mother is not mentioned in this passage—Mémère is referring to Celine’s mother, not her own.

Passage 2 Rationales

Item 9 — RL.6.1

✗ Incorrect: A) Sitting in a chair describes Justin’s action, but it does not show that he is avoiding paying attention to what is happening around him.

✓ Correct: B) Justin looks at his phone even though there is nothing he wants to see, which shows he is using it to avoid engaging with his surroundings.

✗ Incorrect: C) Noticing the sounds and smells shows that Justin is aware of his surroundings, not avoiding them.

✗ Incorrect: D) although Justin looks away after acknowledging Ray, this brief action does not clearly show that he is avoiding paying attention overall.

Item 10 — RL.6.5

✗ Incorrect: A) Ray does notice Justin—paragraph 2 shows Ray catching his eye in the mirror and saying “Nephew.” Claiming Ray does not notice him misreads the text.

✓ Correct: B) Paragraphs 3–5 establish Ray’s attitude toward thirteen-year-olds (“Gets in his own way sometimes,” “Can’t tell ‘em nothing they don’t already know”) before Ray turns his attention to Justin. This structural placement prepares the reader to understand why Ray waits, gives Justin space, and then speaks indirectly in paragraphs 11–14. Students must analyze what this section does in the sequence of events, not just what it says.

✗ Incorrect: C) The passage does not say Ray’s son and Justin share the same problem. Ray speaks generally about thirteen-year-olds, not about a specific connection between his son’s situation and Justin’s.

✗ Incorrect: D) although the conversation does show the barbershop as a social gathering place, the text does not indicate that it directly causes Justin to think about his conversation with Darius, as his thoughts about Darius occur independently of this exchange.

Item 11 — L.6.1

✗ Incorrect: A) Ray is not correcting Mr. Edmonds—both men are using informal English together and laughing. The exchange shows agreement and ease, not instruction or correction.

✗ Incorrect: B) The passage provides no evidence that Ray changes his speech based on how much he likes someone, as his informal language appears consistent with everyone he speaks to.

✓ **Correct: C)** “Ain’t” and “em” are informal, nonstandard English forms. Paragraph 1 describes the barbershop as “the particular warmth of somewhere people came to settle in for a while.” Ray’s informal register matches that atmosphere—he is at ease, speaking naturally among people he knows well. Students recognize the informal usage and connect it to setting and relationship. (L20, L.6.1.e)

✗ **Incorrect: D)** Ray uses informal language when speaking to Mr. Edmonds, an adult customer. The passage does not suggest he shifts register based on his audience.

Item 12 — L.6.5

✗ **Incorrect: A)** The passage does not suggest Justin is too far from the window to see. His failure to process what he sees is internal—caused by distraction—not physical distance.

✗ **Incorrect: B)** “Observed” and “registering” are not simultaneous—they are in opposition. “Without registering” means the mental processing that normally follows observation is absent. Describing them as two concurrent actions misses the contrast the sentence creates.

✗ **Incorrect: C)** “Without registering” indicates the opposite of careful watching. Careful observation would imply active understanding, not the absence of it.

✓ **Correct: D)** “Observed” describes the physical act of looking—Justin does take in specific details of the street. “Without registering” describes the mental processing that does not follow. The last two sentences of paragraph 6 confirm the cause: he has been distracted by what Darius said. Students apply the cause-and-effect relationship between the two words to explain the sentence. (L6, L.6.5.b)

Item 13 — RL.6.6

✗ **Incorrect: A)** Paragraph 13 states Ray “kept working”—he does not stop. This choice misreads the text directly.

✗ **Incorrect: B)** Ray does ask a question in paragraph 11, but the item asks how his POV is conveyed through his choices, not what the question is. Paragraph 13 shows Ray accepting Justin’s non-answer without pressing, which undermines the idea that he believes Justin must talk.

✓ **Correct: C)** After Justin says “Nothing’s going on,” Ray says “All right” and keeps cutting—he does not press. Then paragraph 14 reveals he has been paying close attention: “You know what I notice . . . they always got real specific nothing’s.” Ray conveys care and perceptiveness through timing and indirection. Students must analyze what the author chooses NOT to have Ray say.

✗ **Incorrect: D)** Although Ray makes a general comment about people, the text does not indicate that he is comparing Justin’s situation to his son’s, but rather using the comment to indirectly show he understands Justin’s feelings.

Item 14 — L.6.5

✗ **Incorrect: A)** Justin has not explained his problem to Ray—paragraph 12 shows him saying “Nothing’s going on.” He has not found relief or a way to share what he feels. The simile does not suggest relief.

✓ **Correct: B)** The simile compares Justin’s feelings to something extra in a backpack that won’t compress—it crowds him from the inside and won’t go away. “Taking up space in his chest” reinforces this: the feeling is persistent and hard to contain. Students interpret the figurative language to explain what it reveals about Justin’s internal state. (L14, L.6.5.a DOK 2)

✗ **Incorrect: C)** The simile compares the feeling to something that won’t zip up—something crowding him from the inside, not something mysterious. Justin knows what is bothering him; his problem is that the feeling persists, not that it is confusing.

✗ **Incorrect: D)** The passage does not say Justin said the wrong thing to Darius. Paragraph 6 states Darius “said what he said at lunch, and Justin had acted like it didn’t bother him when it did.” Justin is reacting to Darius’s words, not to his own.

Item 15 — RL.6.3

✓ **Correct: A)** The final paragraph states Justin turns back “not because he needed Uncle Ray’s advice”—he resists the idea of needing it—“but because going without it was worse than going it alone.” This tension is at the heart of the moment: Justin won’t admit he needs help, but acts as though he does. The action reveals a character who is proud but not so proud that he will choose silence over connection.

✗ **Incorrect: B)** The passage does not suggest Justin believes Ray can solve his problem. He goes back in without declaring a purpose—the paragraph gives no indication he expects a solution.

✗ **Incorrect: C)** While Justin is upset about the conversation with Darius, the text shows he stops using distractions (like his phone) and instead chooses to go back for support.

✗ **Incorrect: D)** Justin’s decision is driven by his need for guidance, not by politeness, as the passage focuses on his internal struggle rather than any concern about being rude.

SPELLING ANSWER KEY

Item 16: unsettled

Common errors: unsetteld, unsetteled (single t instead of double t)

Item 17: authentic

Common errors: authenitic, authenttic, authentick

Item 18: empathy

Common errors: emphathy, empthay, empathey

Item 19: explicit

Common errors: explict, explicite, explisit

Item 20: implicit

Common errors: implict, implicet, implisit