



Year Level: Year 7/8  
Genre: Poem

## The Loner

By Julie Holder

*He leans against the playground wall,  
Smacks his hands against the bricks  
And other boredom-beating tricks,  
Traces patterns with his feet,  
Scuffs to make the tarmac squeak,  
Back against the wall he stays -  
And never plays.*

*The playground's quick with life,  
The beat is strong.  
Though sharp as a knife  
Strife doesn't last long.  
There is shouting, laughter, song,  
And a place at the wall  
For who won't belong.*

*We pass him running, skipping, walking,  
In slow huddled groups, low talking.  
Each in our familiar clique  
We pass him by and never speak,  
His liveness is his shell and shield  
And neither he nor we will yield.*

*He wasn't there at the wall today,  
Someone said he moved away  
To another school and place  
And on the wall where he used to lean  
Someone had chalked  
'watch this space'.*

Holder, J. 'The Loner' in Foster, J. [ed] (1982) *A Third Poetry Book*, Oxford University Press, London, p.30.

### QUESTIONS:

#### **Fact and Detail (FD)**

1) In the second stanza, the poet points out that the playground is...

- a) full of activity.
- b) a violent place.
- c) uninviting.
- d) extensive.

**Word in Context (WC)**

2) The poet used the word 'clique' in the third stanza. This means...

- a) class.
- b) group.
- c) grade.
- d) club.

**Figurative Language (FL)**

3) Which of the following is an example of a metaphor?

- a) 'Traces patterns with his feet'
- b) 'His loneliness is his shell and shield'
- c) 'The beat is strong'
- d) 'Strife doesn't last long'

**Comparing and Contrasting (CC)**

4) The poet uses the simile 'sharp as a knife' to describe...

- a) the classroom.
- b) the uniform.
- c) short lived strife in the playground.
- d) the loner.

**Main Idea (MI)**

5) What is the main idea of the poem?

- a) There will always be people who are excluded by others.
- b) Friendships do not last forever.
- c) In life it is important to be independent.
- d) Playgrounds can be unpredictable places.

**Meaning in Context (MC)**

6) In the second stanza, the apostrophe in the word 'playground's' is used...

- a) to show possession.
- b) because the word ends in 's'.
- c) because there is more than one playground.
- d) to show that a letter has been omitted.

**Prediction (P)**

7) Predict what would have occurred if the boy had not moved away.

- a) He would have eventually made some friends.
- b) He would have become the leader of a group.
- c) He still would have been a loner.
- d) He would have joined in with the others.

**Figurative Language (FL)**

**8) Which of these contains an example of alliteration?**

- a) 'And other boredom-beating tricks'
- b) 'There is shouting, laughter, song'
- c) 'For who won't belong'
- d) 'We pass him, running, skipping, walking'

**Facts and Details (FD)**

**9) What does the boy scuff?**

- a) He scuffs his shoes.
- b) The boy scuffs the side of the wall.
- c) The surface of the playground is scuffed.
- d) He makes marks on the bricks with his shoes.

**Conclusion and Inferences (CI)**

**10) The poet suggests that the person who wrote 'watch this space'...**

- a) was deliberately disregarding school rules.
- b) wanted to be the leader of the group.
- c) could not cope with school.
- d) didn't care about the boy leaving.

**Author's Purpose (AP)**

**11) This poem is an example of a...**

- a) ballad.
- b) descriptive poem.
- c) haiku.
- d) cinquain.

**Cause and Effect (CE)**

**12) Why does the boy adopt 'boredom-beating tricks'?**

- a) To show that he doesn't care if he hurts himself.
- b) He wants the other students to notice what he is doing.
- c) He can't hear what the other students are saying to him.
- d) To give the impression that he is unaffected by his situation.