


Text Type: Poem
Suggested finishing time: 15 mins



Listen!

Jingles of Bittersweetness

Let's Think! 

1. What do you think about growing up?
2. Do you enjoy your teenage life?

Once counting the days to the summer holiday
When you could be worry-free about the chitter-chatters,
When you could be carefree about another spot on your face,
You had a tranquil holiday void of gossip or rumours.

Once disgusted with the furriness across the limbs 5
Which were once toned and lean,
Which were once agile and sturdy,
You were not pleased with how grim they looked.

Once being lectured by grown-ups on this and that 10
When you felt like you should have been spared,
When you dressed in your unique ways to impress others,
You believed your adult side had started unfolding.

Now walking with your head down in your alma mater's hallway 15
Where you once happily skipped along,
Where you unearth your hazy bittersweet recollections,
You realise your colourful school days have been painted grey.

Now daunted by midlife problems 20
Compelling me to recall my troubled adolescence,
Causing me to feel nostalgic about the peaks and valleys,
I hereby make it crystal clear that, as always,
I will live my life with resilience,
Despite the occasional mishaps.

~180 words

More to Take Away

Adolescents experience great physical and psychological changes during puberty. They become highly self-conscious and emotionally sensitive, hence their proneness to anxiety, mood swings and depression.

STEAM CLASSROOM

Traditional poems follow regular structures and particular rhyming patterns. Contemporary poems, on the contrary, are free of such limitations. They are usually written in free verse.

Looking into Grammar



Participial phrases are used to give reasons and show results, and to indicate that two actions happen at the same time or that one happens immediately after another.

- ✓ **Threatened** (✗ Threatening) to be expelled from school, he finally complied with the regulation.
- ✗ **Seen** (✓ Seeing) the teacher near the classroom, the students became quiet instantly.

 Circle ONE participial phrase in the last stanza.

Part A Multiple Choice Questions

Answer the following questions based on the information provided in the poem. Choose the best answer by blackening the appropriate circle.

- In stanza 1, what did the writer use to worry about?
 - A. the length of the summer holiday
 - B. the summer holiday homework
 - C. his acne problem
 - D. his chit-chat with his friends
- In line 8, the word 'grim' means _____.
 - A. strange-looking
 - B. unpleasant
 - C. unusual
 - D. smooth
-  In line 15, the word 'hazy' means _____.
 - A. (*adj.*) partly hidden by mist or haze
 - B. (*adj.*) not certain or confused
 - C. (*adj.*) having or filled with haze
 - D. (*adj.*) not clear in memory
-  Which of the following is NOT the writer's opinion?
 - A. The summer holiday is a time free of rumours.
 - B. Adolescence is not a likeable period.
 - C. He has reached middle life.
 - D. Life is bittersweet.
- In stanza 3, which of the following is NOT true about the writer in his teens?
 - A. He was scolded by his parents and teachers.
 - B. He wanted to be admired by others.
 - C. He did not care about others' comments on him.
 - D. He thought he was becoming a grown-up.
- Which of the following literary devices is NOT used in the poem?
 - A. repetition
 - B. personification
 - C. metaphor
 - D. rhyme
- The writer, who used to feel _____ during puberty, _____.
 - A. sentimental...no longer holds a grudge against what happened in the past
 - B. resentful...keeps on thinking about the good things that happened at his alma mater
 - C. unsettled...thinks too much about his misfortunes
 - D. bothered...no longer tries to please or impress others

3 Pay attention to what the adjective being questioned is used to modify.

7 Read the last stanza for how the writer, once young but now mature, feels about life in the past and ahead.



Please scan the QR code on P.6 to access the checklist for evaluating your own reading progress.

Part B Pre-HKDSE Questions

Answer the following questions based on the information provided in the poem. For question 1, answer in complete sentences.

1. Based on what is mentioned in the poem, state THREE signs that a teenage boy is growing up into an adult.

1 What used to trouble the writer?

(i) _____

(ii) _____

(iii) _____

2. Based on how the word 'spared' (line 10) is used in the poem, determine which of the definitions below suits it best.

2 What is the part of speech of the word 'spared'?

- A. (*n.*) an extra thing B. (*v.*) not punished but given space
 C. (*adj.*) not in use and hence available D. (*v.*) shown mercy and allowed to survive

3. Determine whether each of the following statements is true, false, or undecidable because not enough information is given.

Statement	True	False	Not Given
(i) The writer could not recall his teenage trouble.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(ii) The writer has no idea how to cope with the problems in midlife.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(iii) The writer enjoyed purchasing trendy clothes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. Determine whether each of the following statements is a fact (F) or an opinion (O). Write the correct symbols 'F' or 'O' in the spaces provided.

Statement	F/O
(i) The need for one to shave one's face regularly signals the departure from childhood.	
(ii) The memories of one's student days are precious to most.	
(iii) The stages of life are universal to everyone.	

5. Complete the summary of the poem by filling in ONE word in each blank.

The poem's writer is an adult in his (i) _____. Once, he faced tons of problems as a (ii) _____, like changes in (iii) _____ and mood swings. Now, he brings (iv) _____ the following message: though life can (v) _____ be tough, one should always be tougher.

Part C Vocabulary Bank

Match the adjectives that describe people's feelings and attitudes in the left column with the descriptions in the right column. Write the correct letters in the boxes.

A. bittersweet

B. jealous

C. optimistic

D. anxious

E. sentimental

F. grumpy

G. hopeful

H. miserable

1. being in a state of constant fear and nervousness

2. marked by an emotional experience in which the conflicting senses of tenderness and loss make it at once pleasurable and hurtful

3. angry at or bitter about somebody else's achievements or perceived advantages

4. confident that good things will happen in the future

5. being in a very bad and sorry state

6. having or inspiring hope

7. influenced by or connected to emotions like love, sympathy and pity, rather than reason

8. bad-tempered and easily annoyed

Word Craft

Optimistic (Refer to the same page.)

The suffix **-ic** is used to construct adjectives with the meaning 'having some characteristics of' or 'relating to'.

e.g.	chaotic	(=having the characteristics of chaos)
	heroic	(=having the characteristics of a hero)
	scientific	(=relating to science)

Let's Discuss!

1. What do you expect from your teenage years?
2. Do you agree that being an adult is more challenging than being a teenager? Explain your thoughts.