

PART C: PROSE

Total Value: 32 marks

Suggested Time: 40 minutes

Read the excerpt from the story entitled "The Visit." Select the best answer for each question and record your choice.

"The Visit"

adapted from *The Tin Flute*

by Gabrielle Roy
translation by Alan Brown

- 1 Florentine stared, amazed to see her mother there.
- 2 "Maw! What a surprise!"
- 3 She couldn't get over her mother's appearance. As often happens to members of a family who see each other every day, she had ceased to observe Rose-Anna's face, and now saw all the changes that had escaped her: the faint wrinkles around the eyes, the listlessness in her expression, the suffering and courage inscribed on her features. At a glance, she realized all that had slipped in-between today and the remembered image.
- 4 Florentine was stunned. She had helped her mother out of fairness and pride, but without real tenderness, and often with a sense of injury to herself. For the first time, she had occasion to be glad that she had never acted meanly toward her family. She felt a sudden desire, akin to happiness, to be good to her mother, to show herself more attentive, gentle and generous.
- 5 She felt the imperious desire to mark the day with some special kindness, the memory of which would stay intact. She now perceived her mother's life as a long, grey voyage which she, Florentine, would never make; and today, in a way, they were saying good-bye to each other. Maybe their paths were beginning to separate this very minute. Some people need the threat of parting to make them attentive to their own feelings, and in that moment she knew that she loved her mother.
- 6 "Mamma," she said warmly, "come on, sit down!"
- 7 "I just dropped in, I was going by," Rose-Anna explained. "Your father's at home, as you know. And out of work, eh?"
- 8 Oh, that was their mother, starting right off with their troubles! Away from home, she had this embarrassed smile and she didn't mean to dampen youthful spirits — on the contrary, she liked to warm herself by their fire and often adopted a forced gaiety — but her words of complaint came out all by themselves. They were her real words of greeting. And perhaps they were the right words to reach her family, for apart from their worries, what kept them together?
- 9 She went on, speaking more softly, ashamed to talk of these things in the presence of strangers.

- 10 She'd told her all that this morning. Florentine frowned at her own impatience, but she caught herself in time and answered kindly. "You did right to stop by. And I've got just the thing for you. We got chicken today, forty cents. I'm treating you."
- 11 You could almost hear her murmur, forty cents! That's a fortune! All her life, with her knowledge of the cost of food and her ability to make substantial meals from nothing, she had kept her peasant horror of paying in a restaurant for a meal she could prepare at home for half the price. At the same time she had always repressed a secret desire to treat herself some day to this extravagant pleasure.
- 12 "Oh, very well then," she said, giving in to fatigue and temptation, "but just a smidgen of pie or maybe a doughnut. I could eat that, I guess."
- 13 "No, no!" said Florentine, losing patience.
- 14 "No, no," she said again, "you're goin' to eat a big meal, Mamma. It's not often you get a chance to eat at my place, eh?"
- 15 "That's true," said Rose-Anna, touched by the girl's gaiety. "It's the very first time, I do believe. But just the same, I'll just have a cup of coffee, really, Florentine, that's going to do me just fine."
- 16 She watched the rapid movements of the waitresses, impressed by their youth, and stole a look at Florentine, who seemed to have risen far above her family here in the glitter of mirrors and the colourful crowd. She was silent, feeling almost as much embarrassment as pride. In a confused way she realized how imprudent it was always to bother Florentine with their troubles, casting her shadow on this girl's youth; and suddenly, clumsily, she decided to put on a happier front.
- 17 "I'd better not get in the habit of going out, you might get tired of seein' me here. It's so warm and nice in your store. And does it ever smell good! And don't you look pretty now!"
- 18 This compliment was like balm to Florentine's heart.
- 19 "I'm ordering chicken. You'll see, it's good," she cried, back to her first resolve to be kind to Rose-Anna.
- 20 She wiped the counter in front of her mother, brought her a paper napkin and a glass of water, and lavished on her all the attentions she had to pay to strangers day after day without the slightest satisfaction. Today they filled her with joy, as if this was the first time she had ever wiped a counter or set a place; and a distant sound of music caught her, gave its rhythm to her body, and lightened her heavy chores.
- 21 "You know, you got a nice job. You're well off here," Rose-Anna said, misinterpreting the happiness on Florentine's face.
- 22 "That's what you think!" cried the girl, forgetting her resolve. But then she laughed. "Had good tips today, though," she said.
- 23 "You know something?" she went on. "It's always me gets the most tips."

- 24 Then she brought a plate piled high and, as the crowd was gone, took a few minutes to keep her mother company and watch her eat.
- 25 “Is it good? Do you like it?” she kept asking.
- 26 “Just first-class,” said Rose-Anna.
- 27 But she also kept saying, with the tenacity that ruined the smallest extravagance for her, “My, that’s expensive though, forty cents. Seems to me it can’t be worth that much. Just think, Florentine! That’s a lot!”
- 28 When she finished the chicken, Florentine cut her a piece of pie.
- 29 “Oh, I couldn’t! said Rose-Anna. “I had too much already.”
- 30 “It’s all included in the meal,” Florentine insisted. “It doesn’t cost any more.”
- 31 “Well, just a taste then,” said Rose-Anna. “But it’s not out of hunger anymore.”
- 32 Then Florentine, seeing her mother relaxed and almost happy, felt a tenfold desire to add to the joy she had already given her. She reached into her blouse and took out two new bills. She’d been keeping them to buy stockings, and the moment her hands touched the crisp paper she felt a terrible regret, but she sighed and held her hand out to her mother.
- 33 “Here,” she said, “take that. Take it, Mother.”
- 34 “But you gave me your week’s pay already,” Rose-Anna objected.
- 35 Florentine smiled. She said: “This is a little extra. Come on, take it!”
- 36 She was thinking: I’m good to my mother. I’ll get it back. It’ll be counted in my favour. She was still sad at giving up her silk stockings, but she felt a new certainty that she would be happy immediately.
- 37 Rose-Anna had turned red. “Oh,” she said, her fingers busy chasing bread crumbs from her coat, “I didn’t come in to get something from you, Florentine. I know you don’t get to keep much of your pay.”
- 38 She took the bills just the same and put them in her change purse which she slipped into the inside pocket of her bag. Carefully folded and buried so deep, they seemed almost safe from all the pressing needs making their calls upon them.
- 39 “To tell the truth,” she admitted, “I needed that money almost right now.”
- 40 “Oh, Maw,” said Florentine, less pleased with her generosity than she had expected to be, “and you wouldn’t have said a word!”
- 41 She saw the dejected look on her mother, grateful and full of admiration for Florentine, saw her stand up with an effort and go away among the counters, stopping here and there to touch some material or examine an article.

- 42 Her mother! Getting old.... She moved slowly, and her coat, too tight, made her belly stick out more prominently. With the two dollars deep in her purse she wandered off, more uncertain than ever, for now she saw the shining pots and pans and the cloth, so soft to the touch. Her desires grew vast and many, and she left, poorer certainly than when she had come in the store.
- 43 Suddenly all the joy Florentine had felt turned to gall¹. Her happiness at being generous gave way to an aching stupor. What she had done had led to nothing.
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15. Why is Florentine surprised by the sight of her mother ? (paragraph 3)
- A. Her mother arrives early.
 - B. She hasn't seen her mother in some time.
 - C. Her mother's appearance seems to have altered.
 - D. She has never seen her mother dressed so poorly.
16. Which literary device is used in paragraph 4?
- A. dilemma
 - B. flashback
 - C. direct presentation
 - D. indirect presentation
17. In paragraph 5, what does the image of "a long, grey voyage" suggest about her mother's life?
- A. It is tedious.
 - B. It is inspiring.
 - C. It is desperate.
 - D. It is adventurous.
18. In paragraph 16, why does Rose-Anna feel embarrassed?
- A. She cannot pay for her lunch.
 - B. She is jealous of the young waitresses.
 - C. She becomes aware of her shabby appearance.
 - D. She regrets bringing up the family's predicament.

¹ gall: *bitterness*