Fish Cheeks
by: Amy Tan

I fell in love with the minister’s son the winter I turned fourteen. He was not Chinese, but as white as Mary in the manger. For Christmas I prayed for this blond-haired boy, Robert, and a slim new American nose.

When I found out that my parents had invited the minister’s family over for Christmas Eve dinner, I cried. What would Robert think of our shabby Chinese Christmas? What would he think of our noisy Chinese relatives who lacked proper American manners? What terrible disappointment would he feel upon seeing not a roasted turkey and sweet potatoes but Chinese food?

On Christmas Eve I saw that my mother had outdone herself in creating a strange menu. She was pulling black veins out of the backs of fleshy prawns. The kitchen was littered with appalling mounds of raw food: A slimy rock cod with bulging fish eyes that pleaded not to be thrown into a pan of hot oil. Tofu, which looked like stacked wedges of rubbery white sponges. A howl soaking dried fungus back to life. A plate of squid, their backs crisscrossed with knife markings so they resembled bicycle tires.

And then they arrived -- the minister’s family and all my relatives in a clamor of doorbells and rumpled Christmas packages. Robert grunted hello, and I pretended he was not worthy of existence.

Dinner threw me deeper into despair. My relatives licked the ends of their chopsticks and reached across the table, dipping them into the dozen or so plates of food. Robert and their family waited patiently for platters to be passed to them. My relatives murmured with pleasure when my mother brought out the whole steamed fish. Robert grimaced. Then my father poked his chopsticks just below the fish eye and plucked out the soft meat. “Amy, your favorite,” he said, offering me the tender fish cheek. I wanted to disappear.

At the end of the meal, my father leaned back and belched loudly, thanking my mother for her fine cooking. “It’s a polite Chinese custom to show you are satisfied,” explained my father to our astonished guests. Robert was looking at his plate with a reddened face. The minister managed to muster up a quiet burp. I was stunned into silence for the rest of the night.

After everyone had gone, my mother said to me. “You want to be the same as American girls on the outside.” She handed me an early gift. It was a miniskirt in beige tweed. “But inside you must always be Chinese. You must be proud you are different. Your only shame is to have shame.”

And even though I didn’t agree with her then, I knew that she understood how much I had suffered during the evening’s dinner. It wasn’t until many years later -- long after I had gotten over my crush on Robert -- that I was able to fully appreciate her lesson and the true purpose behind our particular menu. For Christmas Eve that year, she had chosen all my favorite foods.
I can cite textual evidence to support my inferences of a text.

1. Being embarrassed about Robert visiting her Chinese home for Christmas Eve is upsetting enough for Amy, but what detail of the setting adds chaos to the mood?
   A. “[Mother] was pulling out black veins out of the backs of the fleshy prawns.”
   B. “All of the relatives arrived in a clamor of doorbells and rumpled Christmas packages.”
   C. “I pretended Robert was not worthy of existence.”
   D. “I was stunned in silence for the rest of the night.”

2. Why does Amy ignore Robert when he first comes to her house?
   A. She is too shy to look at him.
   B. She really doesn’t like him.
   C. She is ashamed of her family’s poor home.
   D. She has been taught to act that way.

3. Which of the following details best describes the way Amy probably looked at the end of the dinner?
   A. Pale, with downcast eyes
   B. Flushed, with a big smile
   C. Exhausted, with black circles under her eyes
   D. Energetic, with a lively expression on her face

I can analyze the development of a theme over the course of a text.

5. At which of the following quotes from the story are you able to determine the theme (refer to your answer for #4)?
   A. “Dinner threw me deeper and deeper into despair.”
   B. “At the end of the meal, my father leaned back and belched loudly, thanking my mother for her fine cooking.”
   C. “After everyone had gone, my mother said to me, ‘You want to be the same as American girls on the outside.’”
   D. “For Christmas Eve that year, she had chosen all my favorite foods.”

I can determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text.

6. In the third paragraph of the story, the author uses the word APPALLING. Which of the following is the best definition of APPALLING?
   A. loud
   B. wrinkled
   C. horrifying
   D. Neat

I can provide an objective summary of the text.

7. Write an objective summary of “Fish Cheeks.” Use the box provided on your answer sheet.

I can determine the theme of a text.

4. What is the theme of the memoir “Fish Cheeks?”
   A. Change yourself to fit in with others.
   B. Appearances can be deceiving.
   C. Overcome evil with good.
   D. Be proud of who you are.
Directions: Read the passages below. For each question, choose the letter of the correct answer. Write your answers on your answer sheet. DO NOT write on this test.

The Dinner Party
by Mona Gardner

The country is India. A colonial official and his wife are giving a large dinner party. They are seated with their guests - army officers and government attaches\(^1\) and their wives, and a visiting American naturalist\(^2\) - in their spacious dining room, which has a bare marble floor, open rafters, and wide glass doors opening onto a veranda.

A spirited discussion springs up between a young girl who insists that women have outgrown the jumping-on-a-chair-at-the-sight-of-a-mouse era and a colonel who says that they haven’t.

“A woman’s unfailing reaction in any crisis,” the colonel says, “is to scream. While a man may feel like it, he has that ounce more of nerve control than a woman has. That last ounce is what counts.”

The American does not join in the argument but watches the other guests. As he looks, he sees a strange expression come over the face of the hostess. She is staring straight ahead, her muscles contracting slightly. With a slight gesture, she summons the Indian boy standing behind her chair and whispers to him. The boy’s eyes widen; he quickly leaves the room.

Of the guests, none except the America notices this nor sees the boy place a bowl of milk on the veranda just outside the open doors.

The American comes to with a start. In India, milk in a bowl means only one thing - bait for a snake. He realizes there must be a cobra in the room. He looks up at the rafters - the likeliest place - but they are bare. Three corners of the room are empty, and in the fourth, the servants are waiting to serve the next course. There is only one place left - under the table. His first impulse is to jump back and warn the others, but he knows the commotion would frighten the cobra into striking. He speaks quickly, the tone of his voice so arresting that it sobers everyone.

“I want to know just what control everyone at this table has. I will count to three hundred - that’s five minutes - and not one of you is to move a muscle. Those who move will forfeit\(^3\) fifty rupees\(^4\). Ready!”

The twenty people sit like stone images while he counts. He is saying “...two hundred and eighty...” when, out of the corner of his eye, he sees the cobra emerge and make for the bowl of milk. Screams ring out as he jumps to slam the veranda doors safely shut.

*(Story continues on the next page).**

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1 attaches - diplomatic officials.

2 naturalist - person who studies nature by observing animals and plants.

3 forfeit - give up as a penalty.

4 rupees - Indian money
“You were right, Colonel!” the host exclaims. “A man has just shown us an example of perfect control.”

“Just a minute,” the American says, turning to his hostess. “Mrs. Wynnes, how did you know that cobra was in the room?”

A faint smile lights up the woman’s face as she replies, “Because it was crawling across my foot.”

I can analyze how particular elements of a story interact.

8. This story is set in colonial times. Why is the time period (colonial times) important in this story?
   A. It explains why the boy put out a bowl of milk as bait for a snake.
   B. It explains why the guests eat in a dining room.
   C. It explains why the colonel speaks negatively about women.
   D. It explains why the American counts to 300.

9. What plot event explains the strange expression on the hostess’s face?
   A. A cobra crawls across her foot.
   B. The colonel speaks negatively about women.
   C. The servant is not doing his job.
   D. She sees a cobra crawl out on the veranda.

10. What plot event marks the solution to the conflict of this story?
    A. The argument between the girl and the colonel ends.
    B. The boy places a bowl of milk on the veranda.
    C. The American begins to count to 300.
    D. The cobra crawls toward the milk and the doors are shut behind it.

I can cite textual evidence to support my inferences of a text.

11. What detail from the story lets you know the snake is crawling across the hostess’s foot?
    A. Screams ring out as the American shuts the veranda doors.
    B. A young girl and a colonel have a spirited discussion about women.
    C. Servants wait in a corner of the room to serve the next course.
    D. The hostess stares straight ahead with muscles contracting slightly.

I can determine the theme of a text.

12. Which statement below best expresses the theme of “The Dinner Party”?
    A. Women have as much self-control as men.
    B. Men have more self-control than women.
    C. Keep milk handy to get rid of cobras in the house.
    D. Women and men should not argue at parties.

I can analyze the development of a theme over the course of a text.

13. At what point in the story are you able to determine the theme (refer to your answer to #12)?
    A. When the American counts to 300 and the guests sit very still
    B. When the boy places a bowl of milk outside the veranda doors
    C. When the hostess says the snake was crawling across her foot
    D. When the host says a man has shown perfect self control
I can determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text.

14. What is the best meaning of the word “spirited” as used in the second paragraph?
   A. Full of energy and determination
   B. Full of fear and anxiety
   C. Full of boredom and silence
   D. Full of anger and violence

15. What is the best meaning of “veranda”?
   A. Bedroom
   B. Bathroom
   C. Garage
   D. Porch

I can provide an objective summary of a text.

16. Write an objective summary of this story. Use the box provided on your answer sheet.
Directions: Read the following story. Then answer each question that follows.

Here is a portion of a story set in Antigua, an island in the Caribbean Sea. The narrator is a young girl named Annie John, who has, for a while, wanted to play with another girl she calls “the Red Girl.”

From The Red Girl
by: Jamaica Kincaid

The Red Girl and I stood under the guava tree, looking each other up and down. What a beautiful thing I saw standing before me. Her face was big and round and red, like a moon--a red moon. She had big, broad, flat feet, and they were naked to the bare ground; her dress was dirty, the skirt and blouse tearing away from each other at one side; the red hair that I had first seen standing up on her head was matted and tangled; her hands were big and fat, and her fingernails held at least ten anthills of dirt under them. And on top of that, she had such an unbelievable, wonderful smell, as if she had never taken a bath in her whole life.

I soon learned this about her: she took a bath only once a week, and that was only so she could be admitted to her grandmother’s presence. She didn’t like to bathe, and her mother didn’t force her. She changed her dress once a week for the same reason. She preferred to wear a dress until it just couldn’t be worn anymore. Her mother didn’t mind that, either. She didn’t like to comb her hair, though on the first day of school, she could put herself out for that. She didn’t like to go to Sunday school, and her mother didn’t force her. She didn’t like to brush her teeth, but occasionally her mother said it was necessary. She loved to play marbles, and was so good that only the Skerritt boys played against her. Oh, what an angel she was, and what a heaven she lived in! I, on the other hand, took a full bath every morning and a sponge bath every night. I could hardly go out on my doorstep without putting my shoes on. I was not allowed to play in the sun without a hat on my head. My mother paid a woman who lived five houses away from us sevenpence a week--a penny for each school day and two pennies for Sunday--to comb my hair. On Saturday, my mother washed my hair. Before I went to sleep at night I had to make sure my uniform was clean and creaseless and all laid out for the next day. I had to make sure that my shoes were clean and polished to a nice shine. I went to Sunday school every Sunday unless I was sick. I was not allowed to play marbles, and, as for the Skerritt boys, that was hardly mentionable.

I can cite textual evidence to support my inferences of a text.

17. Which of the following statements from the story supports the idea that the narrator, Annie, wishes her life were more like the Red Girl’s?
   A. “The Red Girl and I stood under the guava tree, looking each other up and down.”
   B. “She took a bath only once a week…”
   C. “I went to Sunday school every Sunday unless I was sick…”
   D. “Oh, what an angel she was, and what heaven she lived in!”

18. Which details best support the idea that the Red Girl is unconcerned about her appearance?
   A. Her face is big and round and red.
   B. Her feet are big, broad, and flat and were always bare.
   C. Her hair is matted and tangled, and she only bathes once a week.
   D. She plays marbles very well.
I can analyze how particular elements of a story interact.

19. How does the Red Girl's sense of independence affect the narrator?
   A. It makes the narrator glad that she always takes care of her appearance.
   B. It makes the narrator wish she could be free and independent like the Red Girl.
   C. It makes the narrator feel sad and sorry for the Red Girl.
   D. It makes the narrator feel disgust and hatred for the Red Girl.

20. Which of the following plot events in the story causes the narrator to feel this way?
   A. The narrator’s mother washes her hair.
   B. The Red Girl visits her grandmother.
   C. The narrator and the Red Girl stand and look at each other under the guava tree.
   D. The Red Girl's mother lets Red Girl go without bathing or changing her clothes.

I can provide an objective summary of a text.

21. Write an objective summary of this story. Use the box provided on your answer sheet.
The Velveteen Rabbit

(1) The Rabbit sighed. He thought it would be a long time before this magic called Real happened to him. He longed to become Real, to know what it felt like; and yet the idea of growing shabby and losing his eyes and whiskers was rather sad. He wished that he could become it without these uncomfortable things happening to him.

(2) There was a person called Nana who ruled the nursery. Sometimes she took no notice of the playthings lying about, and sometimes, for no reason whatever, she went swooping about like a great wind and hustled them away in cupboards. She called this “tidying up,” and the playthings all hated it, especially the tin ones.

(3) The Rabbit didn’t mind it so much, for wherever he was thrown he came down soft.

(4) One evening, when the Boy was going to bed, he couldn’t find the china dog that always slept with him. Nana was in a hurry, and it was too much trouble to hunt for china dogs at bedtime, so she simply looked about her, and seeing that the toy cupboard stood open, she made a swoop.

(5) “Here,” she said, “take your old Bunny! He’ll do to sleep with you!” And she dragged the Rabbit out by one ear, and put him into the Boy’s arms.

(6) That night, and for many nights after, the Velveteen Rabbit slept in the Boy’s bed. At first he found it uncomfortable, for the Boy hugged him very tight, and sometimes he rolled over on him, and sometimes he pushed him so far under the pillow that the Rabbit could scarcely breathe. And he missed, too, those long moonlight hours in the nursery, when all the house was silent, and his talks with the Skin Horse.

(7) But very soon he grew to like it, for the Boy used to talk to him, and made nice tunnels for him under the bedclothes that he said were like the burrow the real rabbits lived in. And they had splendid games together, in whispers, when Nana had gone away to her supper and left the night-light burning on the mantelpiece. And when the Boy dropped off to sleep, the Rabbit would snuggle down close under his little warm chin and dream, with the Boy’s hands clasped close round him, all night long.

(8) And so time went on, and the little Rabbit was very happy—so happy that he never noticed how his beautiful velveteen fur was getting shabbier and shabbier, and his tail becoming unsewn, and all the pink rubbed off his nose where the Boy had kissed him.

I can analyze how particular elements of a story interact.

22. What internal conflict bothers the Rabbit at the beginning of the story?
   A. He likes Nana but doesn’t like the way she puts the toys back in the cupboard.
   B. He wants to be Real but doesn’t want to feel uncomfortable when he becomes worn and shabby.
   C. He wants to help the boy find the china dog but doesn’t know where to look.
   D. He doesn’t like tunnels in the bedclothes because real rabbits don’t live in tunnels.

23. What plot event causes the boy to start sleeping with the Rabbit?
   A. He decides that he likes the Rabbit the best.
   B. He can’t find his china dog.
   C. Nana takes away all of his other toys.
   D. The Rabbit starts to lose his fur and tail.
24. Which plot event marks the resolution to the Rabbit's internal conflict?
   A. The Rabbit decides he doesn't want to become real anymore.
   B. Nana keeps the Rabbit from becoming real by hiding him in a cabinet.
   C. He talks to the Skin Horse, who tells him that Rabbits can never become real.
   D. He is so happy with the boy, he doesn't notice when the uncomfortable things happen to him.

25. What event marks an example of foreshadowing from the text?
   A. There was a person called Nana who ruled the nursery.
   B. That night and for many nights after the Velveteen Rabbit slept in the boy's bed.
   C. He thought it would be a long time before this magic called Real happened to him.
   D. One evening when the boy was going to bed he couldn't find the china dog.

26. What evidence from the story shows the Nana is mean and cruel to the boy at bedtime?
   A. She hustles around like a great wind putting toys away.
   B. She dragged the bunny by one ear and threw him at the boy.
   C. Sometimes she took no notice of the playthings lying about.
   D. Nana was in a hurry.

I can determine the theme of a text.
27. What is the theme of this story?
   A. If something is worth having, it can be worth the sacrifice.
   B. Toys should always be kept in their place.
   C. Don't get dirty because you may not come clean.
   D. Respect your elders.

I can analyze the development of a theme over the course of a text.
28. At which of the following points are you able to determine the theme (refer to your answer for #27)?
   A. The Rabbit's fur was getting shabby and the boy's kisses had removed the pink from his nose.
   B. Nana sometimes took no notice of the playthings that were lying around the nursery.
   C. The boy stopped sleeping with the China Dog.
   D. The Velveteen Rabbit slept for many nights in the boy's bed.

I can provide an objective summary of the text.
29. Write an objective summary of “The Velveteen Rabbit.” Use the box provided on your answer sheet.
“The Shepherd Boy and the Wolf”
By Aesop

A shepherd boy, who watched a flock of sheep near a village, brought out the villagers three or four times by crying out, "Wolf! Wolf!" When his neighbors came to help him, the boy laughed at them for their pains. The Wolf, however, did truly come at last. The shepherd boy, now really alarmed, shouted in terror: "Do come and help me; the Wolf is killing the sheep!", but no one paid any attention to his cries, nor rendered any assistance. The Wolf, having no reason to fear, destroyed the whole flock.

I can determine the theme of a text.

30. What is the theme of this fable?
A. If you often lie, no one will believe you when you speak the truth.
B. Shepherd boys are not very good at protecting their flock of sheep.
C. Wolves only come if you tell a lie.
D. Don’t try to help your neighbor.

I can analyze the development of a theme over the course of a text.

31. At which of the following points are you able to determine the theme (refer to your answer to #30)?
A. When the Wolf destroys the whole flock of sheep
B. When the neighbors do not pay attention to the boy’s cries for help.
C. When the neighbors run to help the shepherd boy.
D. When the shepherd boy laughs at the neighbors for believing his lies

I can determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text.

32. What is the meaning of the word “rendered” as used in the passage?
A. Learned
B. Spoke
C. Offered
D. Imagined

I can provide an objective summary of the text.

33. Write an objective summary of “The Shepherd Boy and the Wolf.” Use the box provided on your answer sheet.
“Mercury and the Woodman”
By Aesop

A Woodman was felling a tree on the bank of a river, when his axe, bouncing off the trunk, flew out of his hands and fell into the water. As he stood by the water's edge worrying over his loss, Mercury appeared and asked him the reason for his grief. On learning what had happened, Mercury felt pity for his distress and dived into the river. Bringing up a golden axe, Mercury asked the Woodman if that was the one he had lost.

The Woodman replied that it was not, and Mercury then dived a second time, and, bringing up a silver axe, asked if that was his. "No, that is not mine either," said the Woodman. Once more Mercury dived into the river, and brought up the missing axe. The Woodman was overjoyed at recovering his property, and thanked his benefactor warmly; and the latter was so pleased with his honesty that he made him a present of the other two axes.

When the Woodman told the story to his companions, one of these was filled with envy of his good fortune and determined to try his luck for himself. So he went and began to fell a tree at the edge of the river, and presently contrived to let his axe drop into the water. Mercury appeared as before, and, on learning that his axe had fallen in, he dived and brought up a golden axe, as he had done on the previous occasion. Without waiting to be asked whether it was his or not, the fellow cried, "That's mine, that's mine," and stretched out his hand eagerly for the prize: but Mercury was so disgusted at his dishonesty that he not only declined to give him the golden axe, but also refused to recover for him the one he had let fall into the stream.

I can determine the theme of a text.
34. What is the theme of this fable?
   A. Greediness gets you what you want.
   B. Don't use an axe to cut down a tree.
   C. Gold is better than silver.
   D. Honesty is the best policy.

I can analyze the development of a theme over the course of a text.
35. At which of the following points are you able to determine the theme (refer to your answer to #34)?
   A. When the Woodsman loses his axe in the river
   B. When Mercury rewards the Woodsman for his honesty
   C. When the Woodsman's companion becomes jealous of the Woodsman
   D. When Mercury felt pity for the Woodsman

I can determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text.
36. What is the meaning of the word “felling” as used in the passage?
   A. Growing up
   B. Moving out
   C. Looking at
   D. Cutting down