

Grade 4 Mini-Assessment

Springtime Poetry Set

Today you will read two poems, "The Seedling" by Paul Laurence Dunbar and "The Coming of the Spring" by Nora Perry. You will then answer several questions based on these texts. I will be happy to answer questions about the directions, but I will not help you with the answers to any questions. You will notice as you answer the questions that some of the questions have two parts. You should answer Part A of the question before you answer Part B.

Take as long as you need to read and answer the questions. If you do not finish when class ends, come see me to discuss when you may have additional time.

Now read the poems and answer the questions. I encourage you to write notes in the margin as you read the passages.

Poem 1: "The Seedling"

by Paul Laurence Dunbar

1 As a quiet little seedling
Lay within its darksome bed,
To itself it fell a-talking,
And this is what it said:

5 "I am not so very robust,
But I'll do the best I can;"
And the seedling from that moment
Its work of life began.

So it pushed a little leaflet

10 Up into the light of day,
To examine the surroundings
And show the rest the way.

The leaflet liked the prospect,
So it called its brother, Stem;
15 Then two other leaflets heard it,
And quickly followed them.

To be sure, the haste and hurry
Made the seedling sweat and pant;
But almost before it knew it
20 It found itself a plant.

The sunshine poured upon it,
And the clouds they gave a shower;
And the little plant kept growing
Till it found itself a flower.

25 Little folks, be like the seedling,
Always do the best you can;
Every child must share life's labor
Just as well as every man.

And the sun and showers will help you
30 Through the lonesome, struggling hours,
Till you raise to light and beauty
Virtue's¹ fair, unfading flowers

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¹ The quality of doing what is right

Poem 2: "The Coming of the Spring"

by Nora Perry

1 There's something in the air
 That's new and sweet and rare—
 A scent of summer things,
 A whir as if of wings.

5 There's something, too, that's new
 In the color of the blue
 That's in the morning sky,
 Before the sun is high.

 And though, on plain and hill,

10 'Tis winter, winter still,
 There's something seems to say
 That winter's had its day.

 And all this changing tint,
 This whispering stir, and hint

15 Of bud and bloom and wing,
 Is the coming of the spring.

And to-morrow or to-day
The brooks will break away
From their icy, frozen sleep,
20 And run and laugh and leap!

And the next thing, in the woods,
The catkins¹ in their hoods
Of fur and silk will stand,
A sturdy little band.

25 And the tassels² soft and fine
Of the hazel will untwine,
And the elder-branches³ show
Their buds against the snow.

So, silently but swift,
30 Above the wintry drift,
The long days gain and gain,
Until, on hill and plain,

¹ A long, thin cluster of tiny, petal-less flowers growing on certain trees

² A cluster of flowers growing on certain trees

³ Branches from an Elder tree, a tree with poisonous berries

Once more and yet once more

Returning as before,

35 We see the bloom of birth

Make young again the earth.

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QUESTIONS:

- 1. The following question has two parts. Answer Part A and then answer Part B.**

Part A: What does the word “robust” mean as it is used in line 5 of “The Seedling”?

- A. complete
- B. happy
- C. useful
- D. strong

Part B: Why is the word “robust” important in the poem?

- A. It establishes the seedling’s goal in the poem.
- B. It introduces the seedling as the main character in the poem.
- C. It introduces a scientific term important to the seedling’s growth in the poem.
- D. It establishes that the seedling is frustrated and needs help from others in the poem.

- 2. What is important about the last two stanzas (lines 25-32) in “The Seedling”?**

- A. The poet is trying to teach readers a lesson about life.
- B. The poet argues to readers that plants are as important as people.
- C. The poet is making sure the readers know the poem is fiction.
- D. The poet argues to readers that we need to take care of plants in our environment.

- 3. The following question has two parts. Answer Part A and then answer Part B.**

Part A: In Poem 1, “The Seedling,” what theme does the poet develop throughout the poem?

- A. Springtime is the best time of the year.
- B. It is important to do things on your own.
- C. The sunshine and clouds are important parts of nature.
- D. Having support from others can help you achieve great things.

Part B: Which lines from “The Seedling” help to support the correct answer from Part A?

- A. “And the seedling from that moment/Its work of life began.” (lines 7-8)
- B. “To be sure, the haste and hurry/Made the seedling sweat and pant;” (lines 17-18)
- C. “The sunshine poured upon it/And the clouds they gave a shower” (lines 21-22)
- D. “Till you raise to light and beauty/Virtue’s fair, unfading flowers” (lines 31-32)

4. Which two lines from “The Seedling” best develop the idea that the seedling grows quickly into a plant?

- A. “Up into the light of day,” (line 10)
- B. “And show the rest the way.” (line 12)
- C. “To be sure, the haste and hurry” (line 17)
- D. “But almost before it knew it” (line 19)
- E. “And the little plant kept growing” (line 23)
- F. “Till it found itself a flower.” (line 24)

5. Read lines 9, 10, 11, and 12 from the poem “The Coming of the Spring”:

*And though, on plain and hill,
'Tis winter, winter still,
There's something seems to say
That winter's had its day.*

What is the purpose of these lines?

- A. to show that winter is a beautiful season
- B. to make the reader miss spring
- C. to help the reader picture winter
- D. to show the season is about to change

6. Read the following dictionary entry for the word “stir.”

Stir [stur] verb Meanings: 1. To blend together 2. To begin to have activity 3. To cause excitement 4. To change position
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Which meaning of the word “stir” is used in line 14 of “The Coming of the Spring”?

- A. meaning 1
- B. meaning 2
- C. meaning 3
- D. meaning 4

7. Read the following lines from “The Coming of the Spring.” Circle three of the underlined phrases that best help establish the setting for the reader.

1 *There’s something in the air*

That’s new and sweet and rare—

A scent of summer things,

A whir as if of wings.

5 *There’s something, too, that’s new*

In the color of the blue

That’s in the morning sky,

Before the sun is high.

8. The following question has two parts. Answer Part A and then answer Part B.

Part A: Which theme is most developed in “The Coming of the Spring”?

- A. Winter is a difficult time for many.
- B. Spring is a time of life and renewal.
- C. All seasons have something special to offer.
- D. All life is most active during the springtime.

Part B: Which line from “The Coming of the Spring” best shows this theme?

- A. “There’s something in the air” (line 1)
- B. “There’s something seems to say” (line 11)
- C. “Above the wintry drift,” (line 30)
- D. “We see the bloom of birth” (line 35)

9. Why did the poet most likely choose these lines in “The Coming of the Spring”?

*The brooks will break away
From their icy, frozen sleep,
And run and laugh and leap!*

- A. to help the reader remember how it feels when winter finally ends
- B. to make the reader think of the brooks as being like humans
- C. to help the reader imagine the sound of the spring
- D. to make the reader want to see the brooks

10. How are lines 5 and 6 of “The Seedling” different from the rest of the poem and from “The Coming of the Spring”?

- A. They switch to a first-person point of view.
- B. They do not follow a rhyming pattern as seen in the poems.
- C. They provide a fact about what happens in spring.
- D. They do not fit into the settings shared by the poems.

11. Complete the chart by identifying the ways each poet presented their poem. Put an X in the correct column for each description on the left.

Description	“The Seedling”	“The Coming of the Spring”	Both poems
The poem is told like a story.			
The poem is a mostly a description.			
The poem has rhyming.			
The poem has dialogue.			
The poem mainly describes one sign of spring.			
The poem describes many signs of spring.			