Name _____ Date _____

Satire in a Mock Proposal: A Town Full of Signs

Directions: Read the letter carefully, remembering that its speaker enthusiastically praises exactly what the writer is criticizing. Then answer each question about what the writer really means and how the satire achieves its effect.

A Proposal for the Pembrook Town Council

To the members of the Pembrook Town Council: For years our town has led the region in one area of public service, and it is time someone said so. I am speaking, of course, of signs. Where other towns waste money repairing things, Pembrook has the courage to label them. Our neighbors in Dunmore filled every pothole on their main street last year, and I understand they have regretted the expense ever since. As a lifelong resident, I write to propose that we build on this proud tradition.

Consider, for example, the notorious pothole on Mill Road. A less imaginative council would simply have filled it with asphalt and moved on to other business. Ours installed a bright yellow sign that reads BUMP, and that sign has stood proudly beside the pothole for three years. Every driver who hits the pothole now does so fully informed. Residents who once complained about the pothole now complain about the sign instead, which shows real progress. The swing set at Larch Street Park offers an equally instructive lesson. Its broken swing has hung by a single chain since 2022, but the sign beside it, SWING CLOSED FOR REPAIRS, remains in excellent condition.

The numbers, as usual, speak for themselves. According to the town's public works price list, a new sign costs $40, while filling a pothole costs $400. A sign, in other words, is ten times as efficient as a repair. Signs also never need maintenance, unlike bridges, which apparently need it every spring. Last year the town installed fourteen new signs and completed no repairs at all, a record of efficiency that any council would envy.

I therefore propose that Pembrook take the next logical step. The footbridge over Fenwick Creek, closed since the spring flood, should be replaced with a sign that reads IMAGINE A BRIDGE HERE. The public library, whose heater has failed every January for a decade, should post a sign asking patrons to read faster. Finally, the town should create a Department of Signage to install signs announcing the locations of other signs, so that no resident is ever uninformed about anything the town has declined to fix.

Some residents have suggested that the council simply fix the pothole, the swing, the bridge and the heater. I admire their optimism, but I fear such a plan would set a dangerous precedent. Once a town begins repairing things, where will it stop? First it will be the streetlights and then the town pool, and soon Pembrook will have nothing left to label.

Let us instead embrace, celebrate and expand what Pembrook does best. At the town line, the council should place one final sign, large enough for every visitor to read: WELCOME TO PEMBROOK. ALL PROBLEMS CLEARLY LABELED.

1. In this letter to the Pembrook council, what is the main target of the writer's satire?

A. Residents who complain about potholes at every council meeting

B. Drivers who ignore the town's bright yellow warning signs

C. The council's habit of labeling problems instead of fixing them

D. The rising price of new road signs in towns across the whole region

2. In the second paragraph, why does the writer say that every driver who hits the Mill Road pothole "now does so fully informed"?

A. To mock the idea that a warning sign is as good as a repair

B. To praise local drivers for reading road signs so carefully

C. To suggest that drivers should take a different route to town

D. To argue that the pothole is not actually dangerous to drivers

3. The writer claims that a sign "is ten times as efficient as a repair." What flaw in this reasoning does the satire expose?

A. It compares prices while ignoring that a sign fixes nothing.

B. It ignores the fact that repairs are really cheaper than new signs.

C. It assumes that the town already owns far too many of its signs.

D. It overstates how much a brand-new sign actually costs the town.

4. Why does the writer propose replacing the closed footbridge with a sign that reads IMAGINE A BRIDGE HERE?

A. To push the council's habit to an obviously absurd extreme

B. To praise the council's quick and careful response to the flood

C. To suggest a practical way to save money after the spring flood

D. To show that residents no longer need to cross Fenwick Creek

5. Which two of the writer's proposals carry the council's habit of labeling problems to absurd extremes?

☐ A. Posting a sign in the library that asks patrons to read faster

☐ B. Publishing the public works price list so residents can compare costs

☐ C. Creating a Department of Signage to post signs that point to other signs

☐ D. Filling the pothole, rehanging the broken swing and fixing the library heater

☐ E. Holding a public hearing about the footbridge and the spring flood

6. The writer says that fixing the pothole, the swing, the bridge and the heater "would set a dangerous precedent." What does the writer really mean?

A. Fixing the town's problems is exactly what the council should do.

B. Residents who want repairs should pay for them on their own.

C. Repairs could make the town's streets less safe than signs do.

D. The council should wait at least another year before making any decision.

7. Which choice best describes the tone the writer gives the speaker throughout the letter?

A. Openly furious: shouting angrily at the council members

B. Neutral: listing facts about the town without any judgment

C. Sorrowful: mourning the loss of the town's old footbridge

D. Mock-serious: earnest praise that the writer does not mean

8. Why does the writer speak as an enthusiastic fan of the signs instead of as an open critic of the council?

A. The writer hopes to be hired by the new Department of Signage.

B. Open criticism of the town council is not allowed in Pembrook.

C. The writer sincerely admires the council's policy of posting signs.

D. Straight-faced praise makes the habit's absurdity plain.

9. The letter ends by proposing a sign at the town line that reads WELCOME TO PEMBROOK. ALL PROBLEMS CLEARLY LABELED. What does this sign suggest about the town?

A. Pembrook would rather that visitors simply stayed away.

B. Pembrook is known for labeling problems, not solving them.

C. Pembrook plans to hire a professional sign painter soon.

D. Pembrook has finally solved every one of its problems.

10. How does the order of the letter build its satire?

A. It opens with a personal childhood story and closes with a list of statistics.

B. It moves from real problems to absurd proposals that expose the target.

C. It alternates between the writer's views and the council's official replies.

D. It moves from absurd proposals toward sincere, heartfelt praise of the council.