Name _____ Date _____

How a Poem's Structure Creates Meaning: Voicemail

Directions: Read the poem carefully, listening to each message in the order it was left. Then answer each question, checking every choice against the exact words of the poem.

Voicemail

You have four new messages.

Friday, 9:12 PM
It's Dad. I know you're at Grandma's.
I'm not calling to start the whole thing up again,
I promise, I just think that if you had told me sooner
about quitting the team, I wouldn't have
said what I said, so anyway, call me back.

Saturday, 7:40 AM
It's Dad. I made pancakes out of habit this morning,
too many, the way you like them, a little burned,
and the dog keeps checking your room as if you're hiding,
so that's all, I guess. Call me back.

Saturday, 11:58 PM
It's Dad. I keep thinking about the word I used.
Quitter. I heard my own father in it,
the way he said it to me when I was your age,
the way I swore I would never say it to anyone,
so call me back, or don't, and I would understand.

Sunday, 6:05 AM
It's me.
I was wrong.
You don't have to call.
I'll be up.

End of messages. To return the call, press one.

1. The poem begins with the automated announcement "You have four new messages." How does this opening shape the way readers experience the father's words that follow?

A. It suggests that the father is privately replaying his own recordings.

B. It places readers in the listener's position, hearing all of the father's messages one after another in a single sitting.

C. It indicates that the messages come from an unfamiliar stranger.

D. It reveals that the messages were deleted before anyone heard them.

2. In the first message, the father says that if his child "had told me sooner" about quitting the team, he would not have said what he said. What attitude does this explanation reveal?

A. He has already forgotten what the argument was about.

B. He accepts complete responsibility for everything he said.

C. He is furious that his child decided to stay at Grandma's.

D. He regrets the argument but still places part of the blame on his child.

3. The first message breaks a line after "about quitting the team, I wouldn't have" and completes the thought on the following line. What effect does this particular line break create?

A. It speeds the message up so that it sounds cheerful and relaxed.

B. It indicates that the phone call was accidentally cut off.

C. It suggests that the father cannot remember what he said.

D. It leaves the thought hanging for a moment, so the father sounds reluctant to face what he said.

4. Which two details suggest that the father misses his child, even though he never says so directly anywhere in the poem? Select two.

☐ A. "and the dog keeps checking your room as if you're hiding,"

☐ B. "I'm not calling to start the whole thing up again,"

☐ C. "Quitter. I heard my own father in it,"

☐ D. "To return the call, press one."

☐ E. "I made pancakes out of habit this morning,"

5. In the third message, the father isolates one word as its own sentence, "Quitter." He continues, "I heard my own father in it," and remembers how his father once used the word. What does the father realize?

A. His own father is the person who called the child a quitter.

B. His child should apologize for quitting the team.

C. He hurt his child with the same word that his own father once used on him.

D. He feels proud of having been tough on his child.

6. The first three messages each begin "It's Dad." The father's final message begins instead with "It's me." What does this change in the repeated opening suggest?

A. He is angrier than he was in the earlier messages.

B. He has decided to stop calling his child altogether.

C. He speaks more simply and personally, as himself rather than as the parent in charge.

D. He wants to sound more official and formal than before.

7. The first two messages end with a request to call back. The third message softens that request with "or don't, and I would understand." The final message says, "You don't have to call." How does this repeated request change over the course of the poem?

A. It grows more demanding and impatient with each message.

B. It reveals that the father no longer wants to talk at all.

C. It shifts from a request to a release, as the father stops pressing for a call and leaves the choice to his child.

D. It stays exactly the same from beginning to end.

8. Unlike the long, rambling sentences of the earlier messages, the final message is four short lines, each a complete sentence, beginning with "It's me." What is the effect of this contrast in form?

A. The bare, separate lines strip the message down to the plain truth, without excuses or small talk.

B. The short lines repeat the exact words of the first message.

C. The short lines show that the father is too exhausted to finish his sentences.

D. The short lines make the message sound cold, distant and angry.

9. Consider the four messages in the order they were left, from Friday night to early Sunday morning. What does this arrangement reveal about the father?

A. His messages become longer and more detailed over time.

B. He grows angrier and more impatient as the weekend continues.

C. He gradually forgets why his child left home.

D. He moves step by step from defending himself to apologizing.

10. The poem concludes with the automated instruction "To return the call, press one." What is the effect of ending the poem with this line?

A. It shows that the child has already returned the call.

B. It leaves the next step to the listener, so readers never learn whether the child calls back.

C. It proves that the father will never call again.

D. It reveals that the messages were only a dream.