

Directions: Read the passage below and answer the question(s) that follow.

from Betty Gordon in the Land of Oil

by Alice B. Emerson

The Oklahoma oil boom drew many people to the state during the early 1900s. In this novel excerpt, Betty and her friend Bob tour an oil field¹ with Betty's uncle.

- 1 "I thought you knew, goosie, that we measured oil by barrels. That well² is flowing slightly over five thousand barrels a day. Altogether our wells are now yielding well over fifty thousand barrels of oil a day."
- 2 "I read in one of the papers about a man who paid three thousand dollars for one acre of oil land," said Bob thoughtfully. "How did he know he was going to find oil here?"
- 3 "He didn't know," was the prompt answer. "There is no way of knowing positively. Many and many a small investor has lost the savings of a lifetime because he had a 'hunch' that he would bring in a good well. Right here in Oklahoma, statistics show that in one section, of five thousand two hundred and forty-six wells driven, one thousand three hundred and fifty-six were dry. Now it takes a lot of money to drive a well, between twenty and thirty thousand dollars in fact, so you may count up the loss."
- 4 "But there is oil here—just look!" Bob waved comprehensively toward the beehive of industry that surrounded them.
- 5 "Right, my boy. And when they do strike oil, they strike it rich. Huge fortunes have been made in oil and will be made again...."
- 6 From the station they walked to one of the largest storage tanks, a huge reservoir of oil, capable of holding fifty-five thousand barrels when full, Mr. Gordon told them. It was half empty at the time, and three long flights of steps were bare that would be covered when the storage capacity was used.
- 7 "If there isn't a laundry or a hotel in Flame City," observed Betty suddenly, "there is everything to run the oil business with, that's certain. Is it all right to say you have very complete equipment, Uncle Dick?"
- 8 "Your phrase is correct," admitted her uncle, smiling. "Poor tools are the height of folly for any business or worker, Betty. As for Flame City, the place is literally swamped. People poured in from the day the first good well came in, and they've been arriving in droves ever since. You can't persuade any of them to take up the business they had before—to run a boarding house, or open a restaurant or a store. No, every blessed one of 'em has set his heart on owning and operating an oil well. It was just so in the California gold drive—the forty-niners wanted a gold mine, and they walked right over those that lay at their feet."

¹An oil field is a land area with many oil wells.

²An oil well is a device that drills into the Earth to bring petroleum (crude oil) to the surface.

Excerpt from *Betty Gordon in the Land of Oil; Or, The Farm That Was Worth a Fortune* by Alice B. Emerson. In the public domain.

Directions: Read the passage below and answer the question(s) that follow.

The Chance of a Lifetime

- 1 I know what sensible and cautious people in my life would have told me if I'd revealed my wish to go to Oklahoma when the thought first entered my mind. They'd have told me that I was being foolish. They would have said that I had a successful restaurant, that I shouldn't take such a risk when I already had enough money coming in to look after my family and some to spare. I had all of these same thoughts myself, at first. The thing is, the lure of that Oklahoma black gold was just too strong to resist.
- 2 The night before I left, I sat at my sturdy kitchen table, counting out the thousands of dollars I would need to purchase one acre of oil land and drive a well. I'd worked for years to earn and save this money, had poured countless cups of coffee and fried who knew how many egg and bacon breakfast specials. Now I was getting ready to go to another state and take the ultimate roll of the dice. I could come back with more money than the wealthiest business owner in town, but on the other hand I might return with only the clothes on my back. There was no way of knowing. More than once I thought of forgetting the whole thing.
- 3 Despite the uncertainty, I got in my car and headed north. You'll never know if you never try, I told myself. When I arrived at my destination, I found it full of other people just like me. As I settled in, I got to know the other risk takers in the area. I heard stories of sudden wealth and heartbreaking ones about wells that did not yield a single drop of oil.
- 4 As for me, I'll soon know the happy—or tragic—ending of my own story. The well is almost complete. In my dreams, I see a bubbling river of oil—thousands of barrels worth—gushing out of the ground I purchased. I know there is a chance there'll be nothing beneath the surface but dirt and rock. For now, though, I remain hopeful that my investment will give me my own little piece of the Oklahoma oil dream. Whatever the outcome, I know I made the right call.

Directions: Answer the following question(s) relating to the passage titled "from Betty Gordon in the Land of Oil / The Chance of a Lifetime".

- 1 Which choice BEST describes how the narrator's story in "The Chance of a Lifetime" unfolds?
- A. The text describes the reasons why the narrator should follow through on his plan and later mentions possible negative outcomes.
 - B. The text describes something the narrator wants to do and then outlines the steps he takes to make that dream a reality.
 - C. The text describes how much money the narrator needs to put his plan into action and then outlines how he goes about earning it.
 - D. The text describes what others think about the narrator's plan and then outlines the narrator's own views about his dream.

Master ID: 298243 Revision: 3

Correct: B

Rationale:

- A. The narrator does discuss the potential rewards and the possible losses associated with purchasing an oil well in Oklahoma, but he references positive and negative outcomes in the same paragraph (and sometimes even in the same sentence).
- B. In the first paragraph of the text, the narrator reveals his wish: to go to Oklahoma in search of black gold (oil). The subsequent paragraphs outline the actions the narrator took to make this dream a reality (getting enough money together to purchase an acre of oil land and a well, traveling to Oklahoma, and making his purchase).
- C. In paragraph 2, the narrator states that he will need "thousands of dollars" to purchase oil land and drive a well, and also describes how long and hard he worked to earn this money. This choice is not the best one, however, since it does not consider how the whole story unfolds, and the narrator has already earned the needed money by the time he decides to purchase oil land and a well.
- D. The narrator's conflicting thoughts about his plan are revealed throughout the text. While the narrator speculates about what others might have thought of his plan to go to Oklahoma and purchase an oil well, nobody else's actual opinion is related in the text.

Rubric: 1 Point(s)

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.3

Directions: Answer the following question(s) relating to the passage titled "from Betty Gordon in the Land of Oil / The Chance of a Lifetime".

- 2 How does the plot unfold in the "from *Betty Gordon in the Land of Oil*?"
- A. Betty, Bob and her uncle discuss the importance of proper machinery for success. Betty remembers reading about the cost of oil fields. Betty's uncle shows them a working storage area of a successful oil field.
- B. Betty, Bob and her uncle view a successful oil operation. Bob and Betty ask about the cost of these oil fields. Betty's uncle explains the cost and risks of oil fields.
- C. Betty, Bob and her uncle observe the storage area of the oil fields. Betty's uncle explains about the barrel system of measurement. Betty remarks about the need for good equipment.
- D. Betty, Bob and her uncle discuss the risks of the oil business. Betty's uncle shows Betty and Bob a successful oil field. They talk about what makes the oil field a success.

- 3 How does the narrator in "The Chance of a Lifetime" change toward the end of the text?
- A. He becomes more certain that the land he purchased will contain a large amount of oil.
- B. He becomes more comfortable with his decision to purchase an oil well in Oklahoma.
- C. He becomes more aware of the fact that purchasing an oil well is not a sensible thing to do.
- D. He becomes more sympathetic toward those who have purchased oil land and lost money.

Master ID: 298241 Revision: 4

Correct: D

Rationale:

- A. All three of these events do occur, however the first sentence should occur after the second to properly capture how the plot unfolds.
- B. The two do view successful oil fields, however Bob and Betty do not ask about the cost of these particular oil fields, so this answer is incorrect.
- C. While these events do occur in the text, they are not in the proper chronological order. First Betty's uncle explains about the barrel system of measurement, then they observe the storage area. Finally, Betty remarks about the need for good equipment.
- D. In the first three paragraphs, Betty and her uncle talk about how oil speculation can lead to either great riches or lost fortunes, which illustrates the risks of the oil business. In the next two paragraphs, Betty, Bob and her uncle view a successful oil field. In the final paragraphs, Betty's uncle talks about the tools for success in the oil business.

Rubric: 1 Point(s)

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.3

Directions: Answer the following question(s) relating to the passage titled "from Betty Gordon in the Land of Oil / The Chance of a Lifetime".

Master ID: 298242 Revision: 4
 Correct: B
 Rationale:

A. In the final paragraph of the text, the narrator talks about thousands of barrels of oil gushing out of the ground he purchased. This is what the narrator hopes will happen, but he is not at all certain whether the land he purchased will actually contain a lot of oil (or any at all).

B. In the first paragraph, the narrator focuses on the reasons why it would be foolhardy for him to go to Oklahoma to try to take advantage of the oil boom, and refers to his feelings of uncertainty in the second and third paragraphs. While the narrator is still aware of the risk he is taking by the end of the text, the final sentence clearly shows that he is comfortable with his decision.

C. In the first paragraph, the narrator hints at the fact that he himself recognizes that purchasing an oil well is not the most sensible and prudent thing to do. However, he does not seem to become more aware of this fact as the story progresses; rather, he becomes more confident that his decision to take a risk was the right one.

D. The narrator's use of the word "heartbreaking" to describe stories of people who purchased wells that did not contain a single drop of oil suggests that the narrator is sympathetic toward those who have lost money pursuing their oil dreams, but there is nothing in the text to suggest he was ever unsympathetic toward these people earlier in the text.

Rubric: 1 Point(s)
 Standards: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.3

4 The following question has two parts. First, answer Part A. Then, answer Part B.

Part A:

In "from *Betty Gordon in the Land of Oil*", what surprising detail about Flame City does Betty notice as Mr. Gordon is showing her and Bob around?

- A. Not many people are resting or relaxing during the day.
- B. There are few useful businesses or services in the town.
- C. Some of the oil industry's equipment appears in poor condition.
- D. The busy town suggests many people are successfully striking oil.

Master ID: 2395656 Revision: 6
 Correct: B
 Rationale:

A. The excerpt describes a beehive of activity in the oil field, but gives no indication whether the people in town are resting or relaxing.

B. In paragraph 7, Betty notes, "If there isn't a laundry or a hotel in Flame City . . . there is everything to run the oil business with, that's certain."

C. Paragraph 6 describes a half-empty oil tank, but none of the industry equipment is described as inferior or in poor condition.

D. This is an observation made by Bob in paragraph 4.

Rubric: 2 Point(s)
 Standards: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.3

Directions: Answer the following question(s) relating to the passage titled "from Betty Gordon in the Land of Oil / The Chance of a Lifetime".

Part B:

Which sentence from the text shows how Mr. Gordon responds to Betty's observation?

- A. "I thought you knew, goosie, that we measured oil by barrels."
- B. Right here in Oklahoma, statistics show that in one section, of five thousand two hundred and forty-six wells driven, one thousand three hundred and fifty-six were dry.
- C. "Poor tools are the height of folly for any business or worker, Betty."
- D. "You can't persuade any of them to take up the business they had before—to run a boarding house, or open a restaurant or a store."

Master ID:	2395656	Revision:	6
Correct:	D		
Rationale:			
A.	The first sentence from the text is a response to something that happens (related to measuring oil production) before the excerpt begins. It is not related to Betty's observation about Flame City.		
B.	This is Mr. Gordon's explanation of the odds of having a successful well in Oklahoma. It is not related to Betty's observation about Flame City.		
C.	This is Mr. Gordon's response to the question that follows Betty's observation about Flame City. ("Is it all right to say you have very complete equipment, Uncle Dick?")		
D.	This is Mr. Gordon's response to Betty's observation that "if there isn't a laundry or a hotel in Flame City, . . . there is everything to run the oil business with."		
Rubric:	2 Point(s)		
Standards:	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.3		