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**Poem of the Week: *The Unknown Citizen***

**Directions:** Read and annotate the following poem and then answer the questions that follow:

“The Unknown Citizen” by W. H. Auden

*(To JS/07 M 378 This Marble Monument Is Erected by the State)*

He was found by the Bureau of Statistics to be

One against whom there was no official complaint,

And all the reports of his conduct agree

That, in the modern sense of the old-fashioned word, he was a saint,

For in everything he did he served the Greater Community. 5

Except for the war till the day he retired

He worked in a factory and never got fired,

But satisfied his employers, Fudge Motors Inc.

Yet he wasn’t a scab or odd in his views,

For his union reports that he paid his dues, 10

(Our report of his union shows it was sound)

And our Social Psychology workers found

That he was popular with his mates and liked a drink.

The Press are convinced that he bought a paper every day,

And that his reactions to advertisements were normal in every way. 15

Policies taken out in his name prove that he was fully insured,

And his Health-card shows that he was once in hospital but left it cured.

Both Producers Research and High–Grade Living declare

He was fully sensible to the advantages of the Installment Plan

And had everything necessary to the Modern Man, 20

A gramophone, a radio, a car and a frigidaire.

Our researchers into Public Opinion are content

That he held the proper opinions for the time of the year;

When there was peace he was for peace; when there was war he went.

He was married and added five children to the population, 25

which our Eugenist says was the right number for a parent of his generation,

And our teachers report he never interfered with their education.

Was he free? Was he happy? The question is absurd:

Had anything been wrong, we should certainly have heard. 29

1. Who or what is the speaker of the poem?

a. The unknown citizen b. W.H. Auden c. The government d. There is no speaker

2. According to the speaker of the poem, which is more important: **happiness** or **statistics**? (circle the answer)

3. Which line from the poem best supports your answer for #2?

a. Was he free? Was he happy?

b. *(To JS/07 M 378 This Marble Monument Is Erected by the State)*

c. And his Health-card shows that he was once in hospital but left it cured

4. What is the probable meaning of “Eugenist” in line 26?

a. A scientist b. A mathematician c. A parent d. A general

5. What seems to best convey the thematic idea of the poem?

a. Conformity is the key to good citizenship

b. Statistics do not define identity

c. A Modern Man should work hard and obtain things

d. People who do the right things are saints

6. Metonymy is a figure of speech in which a thing or concept is called not by its own name but rather by

the name of something associated in meaning with that thing or concept. Based on this definition what

line contains metonymy?

a. Line 7 b. Line 1 c. Line 8 d. Line 14

7. The title is an allusion to the “Tomb of the Unknown Soldier” and this allusion is most likely included

to…

a. Point out that the Unknown Citizen was a veteran

b. Emphasize the lack of individuality that unidentified soldiers and the unknown citizen share

c. Compare the great sacrifices both made in their lifetimes

d. Emphasize the “monuments” built for both

e. Show how grateful the state was for the services of each

8. Why is the title of the poem ironic?

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9. Argue why the tone of “The Unknown Citizen” is ironic. Use at least two pieces of evidence (direct lines or phrases from the poem) to support your answer.

*(Hint: When you are citing direct lines from a poem, instead of page numbers you use line numbers to*

*indicate where you found the direct quote.)*

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| ~Claim is missing or vague.  ~Little or no analysis in terms of backing claims.  ~Provides little or no evidence; response consists mainly of narration and/or repetition of content.  ~Does not follow a clear organizational structure.  ~Lacks sentence fluency.  ~Demonstrates multiple spelling, punctuation and grammar errors.  ~Does not follow MLA citation guidelines. | ~Offers claim which is limited.  ~Provides minimal analysis in terms of backing claims.  ~Attempts to support position with evidence; however, evidence may be minimal, irrelevant, or inadequate.  ~Inserts direct quotes.  ~Attempts to follow a clear organizational structure  ~Makes attempt to write with fluency and various sentence patterns.  ~Demonstrates partial control of spelling, punctuation and grammar.  ~Inconsistently uses MLA citation guidelines | ~Offers a clear claim.  ~ Provides analysis by backing claims.  ~Supports position with relevant and credible evidence.  ~Integrates direct quotes.  ~Follows a clear organizational structure but may be missing conclusion.  ~Incorporates various sentence patterns.  ~Demonstrates control of spelling, punctuation and grammar.  ~Consistently follows MLA citation guidelines. | ~Offers precise and insightful claims.  ~Provides thoroughly developed analysis by backing all claims.    ~Supports position with compelling, relevant, accurate, and credible evidence.  ~Expertly weaves direct quotes.  ~Follows a clear organizational pattern and includes all parts of a paragraph.  ~Expertly uses various sentence patterns for fluency  ~Demonstrates expert control of spelling, punctuation and grammar.  ~Expertly follows MLA citation guidelines. |