**Reading and Writing for Assessment**

Respond to Questions About an Article

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| Student: |  | Date: |  |

Carefully read the sample excerpt and then answer the questions that follow.

**Excerpt from "The American Scholar"**

by Ralph Waldo Emerson

**1** The theory of books is noble. The scholar of the first age received into him the world around; brooded thereon; gave it the new arrangement of his own mind, and uttered it again. It came into him, life; it went out from him, truth. It came to him, short-lived actions; it went out from him, immortal thoughts. It came to him, business; it went from him, poetry. It was dead fact; now, it is quick thought. It can stand, and it can go. It now endures, it now flies, it now inspires. Precisely in proportion to the depth of mind from which it issued, so high does it soar, so long does it sing.

**2** Or, I might say, it depends on how far the process had gone, of transmuting life into truth. In proportion to the completeness of the distillation, so will the purity and imperishableness of the product be. But none is quite perfect. As no air-pump can by any means make a perfect vacuum, so neither can any artist entirely exclude the conventional, the local, the perishable from his book, or write a book of pure thought, that shall be as efficient, in all respects, to a remote posterity, as to contemporaries, or rather to the second age. Each age, it is found, must write its own books; or rather, each generation for the next succeeding. The books of an older period will not fit this.

**3** Yet hence arises a grave mischief. The sacredness which attaches to the act of creation,—the act of thought,—is transferred to the record. The poet chanting, was felt to be a divine man: henceforth the chant is divine also. The writer was a just and wise spirit: henceforward it is settled, the book is perfect; as love of the hero corrupts into worship of his statue. Instantly, the book becomes noxious: the guide is a tyrant. The sluggish and perverted mind of the multitude, slow to open to the incursions of Reason, having once so opened, having once received this book, stands upon it, and makes an outcry, if it is disparaged. Colleges are built on it. Books are written on it by thinkers, not by Man Thinking; by men of talent, that is, who start wrong, who set out from accepted dogmas, not from their own sight of principles. Meek young men grow up in libraries, believing it their duty to accept the views, which Cicero, which Locke, which Bacon, have given, forgetful that Cicero, Locke, and Bacon were only young men in libraries, when they wrote these books.

1. Which of the following literary techniques is featured most heavily in the first paragraph?
2. nobility
3. repeated phrasing
4. rhyme
5. satire
6. What does the phrase, "brooded thereon" in the second sentence mean?
7. pondered
8. grew depressed
9. ignored
10. hatched out
11. How could you **best phrase** the transitional thought between the first and second paragraphs?
12. The best minds speak truth.
13. Truth is life reflected upon.
14. Poetry is truer than life.
15. The depth of reflection determines the quality of utterance.
16. How does Emerson view the human masses?
17. As resistant to change
18. As the final arbiters of knowledge
19. As "Man Thinking"
20. As devoted to truth
21. Near the end of the third paragraph, the word "dogma" is contrasted with which of the following?
22. individual talent
23. sensory observations
24. personal principles
25. book learning
26. What is the **best statement** of the overall theme of this passage?
27. Books preserve knowledge for later generations.
28. Every generation needs to write new books.
29. Books are imperfect vehicles for knowledge.
30. Books should be banned.