

The tide line

Poetry | 6 questions

Name: _____ Date: _____

Read once for the main idea. Look back at the passage while answering. Find words that support each answer.

A thread of shells marks where the water stayed,
A broken border on the level sand.
The sea has drawn it, then has slipped away;
I trace its ragged edge with one bare hand.

Beyond that line, a footprint fills with light;
A shallow pool reflects the moving sky.
The gulls turn pages neither black nor white,
Their shadows folding as they wheel on high.

I set a stone beside a strand of weed,
A marker for a place I think I know.
But water writes with little care for me;
It smooths the names that careful fingers show.

When I return, the stone has changed its place.
The shells lie scattered in another seam.
The shore has not preserved my tiny trace;
It keeps a story larger than my scheme.

Questions

Choose one answer for each question. You can refer to the passage. The answer notes start on a separate page.

1. What marks the earlier water line?

- A. A row of large stones
- B. A painted sign
- C. A thread of shells
- D. A line of footprints

2. What happens to the speaker's stone?

- A. It becomes a shell
- B. It disappears into the speaker's pocket
- C. It remains beside the same strand of weed
- D. It changes its place

3. What does "ragged" suggest about the edge?

- A. It is completely straight
- B. It is uneven and broken
- C. It is brightly painted
- D. It is deep beneath the water

4. What does the image of gulls turning pages suggest?

- A. The birds are carrying books
- B. The speaker has written on every wing
- C. The clouds form printed sentences
- D. Their moving wings and shadows resemble pages folding

5. What is suggested by water having "little care for me"?

- A. The sea deliberately wants to hurt the speaker
- B. The water is unable to move the stone
- C. The speaker has stopped noticing the shore
- D. The shore changes without following the speaker's plans

6. How does the last stanza develop the speaker's view?

- A. It proves the original line will stay for ever
- B. It asks the reader to build a wall beside the stone
- C. It moves from trying to mark the shore to recognising its larger changes
- D. It shows the speaker forgetting the first visit entirely

Answers and explanations

Try the questions before reading these notes. A practice score is not an exam grade.

1. C. A thread of shells

The opening line describes a thread of shells where the water stayed.

2. D. It changes its place

On returning, the speaker finds that the stone has changed its place.

3. B. It is uneven and broken

“A broken border” and the scattered natural material support an uneven edge.

4. D. Their moving wings and shadows resemble pages folding

The following line describes shadows folding as the gulls wheel, developing the wing-and-page comparison.

5. D. The shore changes without following the speaker’s plans

The water smooths marks and shifts objects regardless of the speaker’s marker or names.

6. C. It moves from trying to mark the shore to recognising its larger changes

The changed stone and shells undermine the attempt to preserve a small personal trace.

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