The Discontented Pendulum

By Jane Taylor

An old clock that had stood for fifty years in a farmer's kitchen, without giving its owner any cause of complaint, early one summer's morning, before the family was stirring, suddenly stopped. Upon this, the dial plate (if we may credit the fable) changed countenance with alarm; the hands made a vain effort to continue their course; the wheels remained motionless with surprise; the weights hung speechless; and each member felt disposed to lay the blame on the others. At length the dial instituted a formal inquiry as to the cause of the stagnation, when hands, wheels, weights, with one voice, protested their innocence.

But now a faint tick was heard below from the pendulum, who spoke thus: "I confess myself to be the sole cause of the present stoppage; and I am willing, for the general satisfaction, to assign my reasons. The truth is, that I am tired of ticking." Upon hearing this, the old clock became so enraged that it was upon the very point of striking.

"Lazy wire!" exclaimed the dial plate, holding up its bands.

"Very good!" replied the pendulum; "it is vastly easy for you, Mistress Dial, who have always, as everybody knows, set yourself up above me,—it is vastly easy for you, I say, to accuse other people of laziness! you who have had nothing to do all your life but to stare people in the face, and to amuse yourself with watching all that goes on in the kitchen. Think, I beseech you, how you would like to be shut up for life in this dark closet, and to wag backward and forward year after year, as I do."

"As to that," said the dial, "is there not a window in your house on purpose for you to look through?"

"For all that," resumed the pendulum, "it is very dark here; and, although there is a window, I dare not stop even for an instant to look out at it. Besides, I am really tired of my way of life; and, if you wish, I'll tell you how I took this disgust at my employment. I happened, this morning, to be calculating how many times I should have to tick in the course of only the next twenty-four hours; perhaps some one of you above there can give me the exact sum."

The minute hand, being quick at figures, presently replied, "Eighty-six thousand four hundred times."

"Exactly so," replied the pendulum. "Well, I appeal to you all, if the very thought of this was not enough to fatigue anyone; and when I began to multiply the strokes of one day by those of months and years, really it was no wonder if I felt discouraged at the prospect. So, after a great deal of reasoning and hesitation, thinks I to myself, I'll stop."
The dial could scarcely keep its countenance during this harangue; but, resuming its gravity, thus replied: "Dear Mr. Pendulum, I am really astonished that such a useful, industrious person as yourself should have been seized by this sudden weariness. It is true, you have done a great deal of work in your time; so have we all, and are likely to do; which, although it may fatigue us to think of, the question is, whether it will fatigue us to do. Would you now do me the favor to give about half a dozen strokes to illustrate my argument?"

The pendulum complied, and ticked six times at its usual pace. "Now," resumed the dial, "may I be allowed to inquire if that exertion is at all fatiguing or disagreeable to you?" "Not in the least," replied the pendulum; "it is not of six strokes that I complain, nor of sixty, but of millions."

"Very good," replied the dial; "but recollect that, although you may think of a million of strokes in an instant, you are required to execute but one; and that, however often you may hereafter have to swing, a moment will always be given you to swing in." "That consideration staggers me, I confess," said the pendulum. "Then I hope," resumed the dial plate, "that we shall all return to our duty immediately; for the maids will be in bed if we stand idling thus."

Upon this, the weights, who had never been accused of light conduct, used all their influence in urging him to proceed; when, as if with one consent, the wheels began to turn, the hands began to move, the pendulum began to swing, and, to its credit, ticked as loud as ever; while a red beam of the rising sun, that streamed through a hole in the kitchen, shining full upon the dial plate, it brightened up as if nothing had been the matter.

When the farmer came down to breakfast that morning, upon looking at the clock, he declared that his watch had gained half an hour in the night.

A. Item Prompt: During the course of this story, the pendulum undergoes a major transformation. What lesson does he learn, and how does the dial help him reach this new understanding? Use details from the story to support your response.

B. Item Stem: Read this dictionary entry for the word “countenance.”

Countenance (n) 1. calm expression. 2. moral support. 3. behavior. 4. face. Which definition best applies to the way the word “countenance” is used in the highlighted sentences above?

A. calm expression
B. moral support
C. behavior
D. face
Item #2

Read the following poem and then answer the question. The following poem is based on a story from the Civil War. According to legend, when Major General Stonewall Jackson led Confederate troops through Frederick, Maryland, on September 6, 1862, Union supporter Barbara Frietchie waved the Union flag in protest.

Barbara Frietchie by John Greenleaf Whittier

UP from the meadows rich with corn,  
Clear in the cool September morn,  
The clustered spires of Frederick stand  
Green-walled by the hills of Maryland.

Round about them orchards sweep,    5  
Apple and peach tree fruited deep,  

Fair as the garden of the Lord  
To the eyes of the famished rebel horde,  

On that pleasant morn of the early fall  
When Lee marched over the mountain-wall;  10  

Over the mountains winding down, Horse and foot, into Frederick town.  
Forty flags with their silver stars, forty flags with their crimson bars,  

Flapped in the morning wind: the sun  15  
Of noon looked down, and saw not one.  

Up rose old Barbara Frietchie then,  
Bowed with her fourscore years and ten;  20  

Bravest of all in Frederick town,  
She took up the flag the men hauled down;  

In her attic window the staff she set, To show that one heart was loyal yet.  
Up the street came the rebel tread, Stonewall Jackson riding ahead  

Under his slouched hat left and right    25  
He glanced; the old flag met his sight
'Halt!'—the dust-brown ranks stood fast.
'Fire!'—out blazed the rifle-blast.

It shivered the window, pane and sash;
It rent the banner with seam and gash. 30

Quick, as it fell, from the broken staff
Dame Barbara snatched the silken scarf.

She leaned far out on the window-sill,
And shook it forth with a royal will.

'Shoot, if you must, this old gray head,
But spare your country's flag,' she said. 35

A shade of sadness, a blush of shame,
Over the face of the leader came;

The nobler nature within him stirred
To life at that woman's deed and word; 40

'Who touches a hair of yon gray head
Dies like a dog! March on!' he said.

All day long through Frederick street
Sounded the tread of marching feet:

All day long that free flag tost
Over the heads of the rebel host. 45

Ever its torn folds rose and fell
On the loyal winds that loved it well;

And through the hill-gaps sunset light
Shone over it with a warm good-night. 50

Barbara Frietchie's work is o'er,
And the Rebel rides on his raids no more.

Honor to her! and let a tear
Fall, for her sake, on Stonewall’s bier.

Over Barbara Frietchie’s grave, 55
Flag of Freedom and Union, wave!

Peace and order and beauty draw
Round thy symbol of light and law;

And ever the stars above look down
On thy stars below in Frederick town! 60

A. Item Prompt: The poet wrote this poem using couplets, paired rhyming lines with the same meter. Describe how this structure emphasizes what takes place in the poem. Support your answer using details from the poem.

B. Item Stem: Which words from the poem are intended to emphasize Barbara Frietchie’s advanced age?

Options:
A. rose (line 17) and snatched (line 32)
B. bowed (line 18) and gray (lines 35 and 41)
C. bravest (line 19) and royal (line 34)
D. dame (line 32) and deed (line 40)

Item #3

Read the following passage and then answer the question.

An Old-Fashioned Girl by Louisa May Alcott

Polly hoped the "dreadful boy" would not be present; but he was, and stared at her all dinner-time, in a most trying manner. Mr. Shaw, a busy-looking gentleman, said, "How do you do, my dear? Hope you'll enjoy yourself;" and then appeared to forget her entirely. Mrs. Shaw, a pale, nervous woman, greeted her little guest kindly, and took care that she wanted for nothing. Madam Shaw, a quiet old lady, with an imposing cap, exclaimed on seeing Polly, "Bless my heart! The image of her mother a sweet woman how is she, dear?" and kept peering at the new-comer over her glasses, till, between Madam and Tom, poor Polly lost her appetite.
Fanny chatted like a magpie, and Maud fidgeted, till Tom proposed to put her under the big dish-cover, which produced such an explosion, that the young lady was borne screaming away, by the much-enduring Katy. It was altogether an uncomfortable dinner, and Polly was very glad when it was over. They all went about their own affairs; and after doing the honors of the house, Fan was called to the dressmaker, leaving Polly to amuse herself in the great drawing-room.

Polly was glad to be alone for a few minutes; and, having examined all the pretty things about her, began to walk up and down over the soft, flowery carpet, humming to herself, as the daylight faded, and only the ruddy glow of the fire filled the room. Presently Madam came slowly in, and sat down in her arm-chair, saying, "That's a fine old tune; sing it to me, my dear. I haven't heard it this many a day." Polly didn't like to sing before strangers, for she had had no teaching but such as her busy mother could give her; but she had been taught the utmost respect for old people, and having no reason for refusing, she directly went to the piano, and did as she was bid.

"That's the sort of music it's a pleasure to hear. Sing some more, dear," said Madam, in her gentle way, when she had done.

Pleased with this praise, Polly sang away in a fresh little voice that went straight to the listener's heart and nestled there. The sweet old tunes that one is never tired of were all Polly's store; and her favorites were Scotch airs, such as, "Yellow-Haired Laddie," "Jock o' Hazeldean," "Down among the Heather," and "Birks of Aberfeldie." The more she sung, the better she did it; and when she wound up with "A Health to King Charlie," the room quite rung with the stirring music made by the big piano and the little maid.

"By George, that's a jolly tune! Sing it again, please," cried Tom's voice; and there was Tom's red head bobbing up over the high back of the chair where he had hidden himself.

It gave Polly quite a turn, for she thought no one was hearing her but the old lady dozing by the fire. "I can't sing anymore; I'm tired," she said, and walked away to Madam in the other room. The red head vanished like a meteor, for Polly's tone had been decidedly cool.

The old lady put out her hand, and drawing Polly to her knee, looked into her face with such kind eyes, that Polly forgot the impressive cap, and smiled at her confidingly; for she saw that her simple music had pleased her listener, and she felt glad to know it.

"You mustn't mind my staring, dear," said Madam, softly pinching her rosy cheek. "I haven't seen a little girl for so long, it does my old eyes good to look at you."

Polly thought that a very odd speech, and couldn't help saying, "Aren't Fan and Maud little girls, too?"

"Oh, dear, no! Not what I call little girls. Fan has been a young lady this two years, and Maud is a spoiled baby. Your mother's a very sensible woman, my child."

"What a very queer old lady!" thought Polly; but she said "Yes'm" respectfully, and looked at the fire.
"You don't understand what I mean, do you?" asked Madam, still holding her by the chin.

"No 'm; not quite."

"Well, dear, I'll tell you. In my day, children of fourteen and fifteen didn't dress in the height of the fashion; go to parties, as nearly like those of grown people as it's possible to make them; lead idle, giddy, unhealthy lives, and get blis, at twenty. We were little folks till eighteen or so; worked and studied, dressed and played, like children; honored our parents; and our days were much longer in the land than now, it seems to, me."

The old lady appeared to forget Polly at the end of her speech; for she sat patting the plump little hand that lay in her own, and looking up at a faded picture of an old gentleman with a ruffled shirt and a queue.

"Was he your father, Madam?"

"Yes, dear; my honored father. I did up his frills to the day of his death; and the first money I ever earned was five dollars which he offered as a prize to whichever of his six girls would lay the handsomest darn in his silk stockings."

"How proud you must have been!" cried Polly, leaning on the old lady's knee with an interested face.

"Yes, and we all learned to make bread, and cook, and wore little chintz gowns, and were as gay and hearty as kittens. All lived to be grandmothers and fathers; and I'm the last, seventy, next birthday, my dear, and not worn out yet; though daughter Shaw is an invalid at forty."

"That's the way I was brought up, and that's why Fan calls me old-fashioned, I suppose. Tell more about your papa, please; I like it," said Polly.

"Say 'father.' We never called him papa; and if one of my brothers had addressed him as 'governor,' as boys do now, I really think he'd have him cut off with a shilling."

A. Item Stem: In the PINK highlighted sentences in the excerpt, the narrator compares Fanny to a magpie and Tom to a meteor. Explain what the author suggests about Polly by using these similes.

B. Item Stem: Madame Shaw seems to regard Polly more warmly than she does the other children. Choose the YELLOW highlighted sentence from the story that provides the best evidence that Polly shares this feeling.

Item #4

Read the following text and then answer the question.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) leads research in space exploration and aeronautics.
NASA Gives Public New Internet Tool To Explore The Solar System

PASADENA, Calif.-- NASA is giving the public the power to journey through the solar system using a new interactive Web-based tool.

The "Eyes on the Solar System" interface combines video game technology and NASA data to create an environment for users to ride along with agency spacecraft and explore the cosmos. Screen graphics and information such as planet locations and spacecraft maneuvers use actual space mission data.

"This is the first time the public has been able to see the entire solar system and our missions moving together in real-time," said Jim Green, director of NASA's Planetary Science Division at the agency's Headquarters in Washington. "It demonstrates NASA's continued commitment to share our science with everyone."

The virtual environment uses the Unity game engine to display models of planets, moons, asteroids, comets and spacecraft as they move through our solar system. With keyboard and mouse controls, users cruise through space to explore anything that catches their interest. A free browser plug-in, available at the site, is required to run the Web application.

"You are now free to move about the solar system," said Blaine Baggett, executive manager in the Office of Communication and Education at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in Pasadena, Calif. "See what NASA's spacecraft see -- and where they are right now -- all without leaving your computer."

Users may experience missions in real-time, and "Eyes on the Solar System" also allows them to travel through time. The tool is populated with NASA data dating back to 1950 and projected to 2050.

The playback rate can be sped up or slowed down. When NASA's Juno spacecraft launched on Aug. 5, 2011, users could look ahead to see the mission's five-year journey to Jupiter in a matter of seconds.

Point of view can be switched from faraway to close-up to right "on board" spacecraft. Location, motion and appearance are based on predicted and reconstructed mission data. Dozens of controls on a series of pop-up menus allow users to fully customize what they see, and video and audio tutorials explain how to use the tool's many options. Users may choose from 2-D or 3-D modes, with the latter simply requiring a pair of red-cyan glasses to see.

"By basing our visualization primarily on mission data, this tool will help both NASA and the public better understand complex space science missions," said Kevin Hussey, manager of Visualization Technology Applications and Development at JPL, whose team developed "Eyes on the Solar System."

"Eyes on the Solar System" is in beta release. It has been demonstrated at science conferences, in classrooms and at the 2011 South by Southwest Interactive Conference in Austin, Texas.

Designers are updating "Eyes on the Solar System" to include NASA science missions launching during the coming months, including GRAIL to the moon and the Mars Science Laboratory Curiosity rover.
A. Item Prompt: What is the author’s main purpose for writing this text? Analyze how the author uses language and other strategies to reinforce the main purpose? Support your response using specific details from the text.

B. Item Stem: Choose the two yellow highlighted sentences that show that NASA makes predictions about the data space missions will generate before the missions occur. Write your sentences below:

C. Item Stem: Select the red highlighted word that comes from a Latin root that means “to perform work by hand.” Write the correct word below.

Item #5

Lava Tubes

Lava tubes are the most common type of cave formed by lava. Many types of caves can be found throughout the world and contain incredible rock formations. Most lava tubes form from a type of lava called “pahoehoe” flows. The smooth, continuous surfaces of pahoehoe flows are created by lava continuously moving under a hard outer layer. As a stream of lava flows away from a volcano, it cools in the surrounding air. This creates a hard outer crust that thickens as more lava begins to cool. Hot lava continues to flow under this crust. When the eruption stops, the outer crust cools completely, leaving a tube-like cave.

A. Item Stem: The author needs to revise the above paragraph to eliminate information that is not part of the topic. Select the sentence that should be removed.

Item #6

Read the following passage and then answer the question.

One reason that all schools should teach students about how advertising works is that advertisers understand us better than we understand ourselves. Not all people study psychology, but you can bet that advertisers use the insights of modern psychology to make us want their products. Psychological research shows that humans get more happiness from relationships than from things. Therefore, a large number of ads deliberately confuse products with people or relationships in order to suggest that buying that product will bring us the positive feelings that good relationships offer. For example, one car ad in a magazine showed a happy and attractive young couple hugging next to a new car. The ad said “The best relationships are lasting ones,” which was clearly intended to refer to the car’s reputation for reliability as well as to the happy couple. Another ad for health insurance showed a grandfather playing with his grandkids, with the words “Life’s precious gift.”
A. Item Stem: Which of the following is the best conclusion for this paragraph?

Options:

A. Clearly the ad was trying to convince readers that only people with health insurance would be well enough to play with their grandkids.

B. All ads are designed to take advantage of consumers by showing us our deepest desires and greatest fears.

C. Most consumers are smart enough not to be taken advantage of by advertising schemes.

D. Consumers who understand the way advertising works are less likely to fall for the psychological tricks of advertisers.

Item #7

Read the following passage and then answer the question.

Lizards are fascinating creatures. There are over 3,000 known species, including monitors, skinks, geckos, chameleons, and iguanas, and they vary greatly in appearance. The largest lizard, the Komodo dragon, can grow over ten feet long, and the smallest, the Jaragua lizard, can fit on a dime. Skinks usually have smooth scales like snakes, iguanas have mohawk-like crests running down their backs, and the moloch is covered with spikes from head to tail. Lizards vary in color from shades of gray and brown to bright red or green, spotted or striped. Most have four legs but some are legless and easily confused with snakes (Hint: if it has external eardrums and eyelids it’s a lizard). Geckos can walk up walls. Chameleons not only change color but also have prehensile tails, similar to those of monkeys, that wrap around branches and their eyes can move in different directions.

A. Item Stem: What is the best way to revise the highlighted sentence to match the language and style of the paragraph?

Options:

A. Geckos are able to adhere to flush surfaces because setae on their footpads facilitate van der Waals forces between the setae structures and the surface.

B. Geckos are awesome because they have sticky toes that allow them to climb windows like Spiderman.

C. Geckos have the remarkable ability to walk up walls thanks to tiny hair-like structures on their toes that cling to smooth surfaces.
D. Geckos scurry up walls like tiny dancers gliding effortlessly across a stage, their movements as natural as a well-rehearsed ballet.

B. Item Stem: Select the correct way to revise the sentence highlighted in red.

Options:

A. Skinks usually have smooth scales like snakes iguanas have mohawk-like crests running down their backs, and the moloch are covered with spikes from head to tail.

B. Skinks usually have smooth scales like snakes, iguanas have mohawk-like crests running down their backs, and the moloch is covered with spikes from head to tail.

C. Skinks usually have smooth scales, like snakes iguanas have mohawk-like crests running down their backs and the moloch is covered with spikes, from head to tail.

D. Skinks usually have smooth scales, like snakes, iguanas have mohawk-like crests running down their backs, and the moloch are covered with spikes from head to tail.

Item #8

Read these paragraphs from a student's report and then answer the question.

Year-round Schools

Year-round schools are a better way to educate students than the traditional nine-month schedule. Students are more likely to remember information over short breaks than they are during a long summer vacation. One study conducted by a group that runs year-round schools showed that their students had higher test scores than students who attended schools with a traditional schedule. Many teachers say they have to spend September and October reviewing material taught the previous year.

Some people argue that students shouldn’t have to go to school any longer than they already do, but with year-round schools students get the same amount of time off, it is just at different times during the year. Short vacations throughout the year give students and teachers much needed breaks and help keep them from burning out. This schedule actually gives families more freedom to plan trips since they aren’t limited to traveling in the summer. In addition, ski resort owners say that a longer break in winter is beneficial because people can spend more time skiing. My friend says that students won’t mind attending school in the summer if they get to relax during their other breaks.
A. Item Stem:

Evaluate whether the evidence used in these paragraphs is relevant and comes from a credible source. Write the highlighted statements in the appropriate boxes below.

| Not a credible source | Not relevant to the argument | Credible and relevant |