"The Flying Machine" (Description of Story)*

"The Flying Machine" is a story that considers the nature of peace and progress while subtly exploring the themes of personal and political responsibility. The story recounts the events of a single day and the difficult decision made by a fictional emperor in 5th century China.

While the Emperor is enjoying the tranquility of the morning, a servant rushes in to tell him about a "miracle." After several attempts, the servant finally rouses the Emperor to look at the miracle in the sky: a man flying with wings fashioned from paper and bamboo. The emperor is stunned, then demands that the inventor be brought to him.

The Emperor decrees that the man and his invention be destroyed because the progress symbolized by the flying machine threatens both the Emperor's way of life and the well-being of his people. In order to illustrate his point to the inventor, the Emperor shows an invention of his own that mirrors the natural world: a wind-up box containing small trees and miniature flying birds. The inventor tries to convince the Emperor that his flying machine, like the Emperor's invention, is a thing of beauty. The Emperor, however, chooses to protect the peace of his dominion from the possibility of future invasion, and sacrifices the momentary beauty provided by the flying machine. The story ends with the Emperor enjoying the peaceful miniature world inside his wind-up box.

* We did not receive copyright approval to put the actual text from the student booklet on the Website. The full text can be found in Ray Bradbury, The Golden Apples of the Sun and Other Stories. New York: Avon Books, 1997.
1. The Emperor did not rush out to see the flying machine when his servant first told him about it because the Emperor

A) was too frail to run
B) had just awakened from a dream
C) wanted time to think about what it might mean
D) was testing the servant's loyalty to him
Key

1. The Emperor did not rush out to see the flying machine when his servant first told him about it because the Emperor
   A) was too frail to run
   B) had just awakened from a dream
   C) wanted time to think about what it might mean
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1994 National Performance Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Percentage of Students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>58%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Incorrect</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omitted</td>
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Note:

- These results are for public and nonpublic school students.
- Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Contexts for Reading: Reading for Literary Experience
Aspects of Reading: Developing Interpretation

NAEP released item, grade 8
Contexts for Reading

Reading for Literary Experience

- Involves the reader in exploring themes, events, characters, settings, problems, and the language of literary works

The reader brings his or her experiences and knowledge to the text in such activities as anticipating events, picturing settings, predicting consequences, analyzing actions, and considering the language of literary works. The reader thinks about the perspective of the authors and characters and considers the language and story structure when reading for literary experience. Various types of texts are associated with reading for literary experience, including novels, short stories, poems, plays, legends, biographies, myths, and folktales.

Aspects of Reading

Developing Interpretation

To develop an interpretation, the reader must extend initial impressions to develop a more complete understanding of what was read. This process involves linking information across parts of a text as well as focusing on specific information. Questions that assess this aspect of reading include drawing inferences about the relationship of two pieces of information and providing evidence to determine the reason for an action. Questions that assess this aspect of reading include the following:

- What event marked a change in the plot or situation?
- What caused the character to ________?
- What caused this event? __________?
- What is the meaning of __________?
- What type of person is this character? Explain.
- What does this idea imply?
- In what ways are these ideas important to the topic or theme?
- What will be the result of this step in the directions?
- What does this character think about ________?