Up the Cool'y excerpt from Main-Travelled Roads by Hamlin Garland

Mr. Howard McLane in his chair let his newspaper fall on his lap, and gazed out upon it with dreaming eyes. It had a certain mysterious glamour to him; the lakes were cooler and brighter to his eye, the greens fresher, and the grain more golden than to anyone else, for he was coming back to it all after an absence of ten years. It was, besides, his West. He still took pride in being a Western man.

His mind all day flew ahead of the train to the little town, far on toward the Mississippi, where he had spent his boyhood and youth. As the train passed the Wisconsin River, with its curiously carved cliffs, its cold, dark, swift-swirling water eating slowly under cedar-clothed banks, Howard began to feel curious little movements of the heart.

It was about six o’clock as he caught sight of the splendid broken line of hills on which his baby eyes had looked thirty-five years ago. A few minutes later, and the train drew up at the grimy little station set into the hillside, and, giving him just time to leap off, plunged on again toward the West. Howard felt a ridiculous weakness in his legs as he stepped out upon the broiling hot, splinterly planks of the station and faced the few idlers lounging about. He simply stood and gazed with the same intensity and absorption one of the idlers might show standing before the Brooklyn Bridge.

The town caught and held his eyes fi rst. How poor and dull and sleepy and squalid it seemed! The one main street ended at the hillside at his left, and stretched away to the north, between two rows of the usual village stores, unrelieved by a tree or a touch of beauty. An unpaved street, with walled, drab-colored, miserable, rotting wooden buildings; the same—only worse and more squalid—was the town. The same, only more beautiful still, was the majestic amphitheater of green wooded hills that circled the horizon, and toward which he lifted his eyes. He thrilled at the sight.

“Glorious!” he cried involuntarily.

Accustomed to the White Mountains, to the Alleghenies, he had wondered if these hills would retain their old-time charm. They did. He took off his hat to them as he stood there. Richly wooded, with gently sloping green sides, rising to massive square or founded tops with dim vistas, they glowed down upon the squat little town, gracious, lofty in their greeting, immortal in their vivid and delicate beauty.

He was a goodly figure of a man as he stood there beside his valise. Portly, tall, handsomely dressed, and with something unusually winning in his brown mustache and blue eyes, something scholarly suggested by the pinch-nose glasses, something strong in the repose of the head. He smiled as he saw how unchanged was the grouping of the loafers on the salt-barrels and nail-kegs. He recognized most of them—a little more bent and a little grayer.

They sat in the same attitudes and joked each other, breaking into short and sudden fits of laughter, and pounded each other on the back, just as when he was a student and going to and fro daily on the train. They ruminated on him as he passed, speculating in a perfectly audible way upon his business.

“Looks like a drummer.”

“No, he ain’t no drummer. See them Boston glasses?”

“That’s so. Guess he’s a teacher.”

“Bos’n, I guess.”
“You’re William McTurg,” Howard said, coming up to him.

“I am, sir,” replied the soft-voiced giant, turning and looking down on the stranger, with an amused twinkle in big deep brown eyes. He stood tall, though his hair and beard were white.

“I’m Howard McLane.”

“Ye begin t’ look it,” said McTurg, removing his right hand from his pocket. “How are ye?”

“I’m first-rate. How’s mother and Grant?”

“Saw ’m plowing corn as I came down. Guess he’s all right. Want a boost?”

“Well, yes?”

‘Bout goin’ home. Climb right in. That’s my rig, right there,” nodding at a sleek bay colt hitched in a covered buggy.

They climbed into the seat after William had lowered the buggy-top and unhitched the horse from the post. “Want to go by river, or ’round by the hills?”

“Hills, I guess.”

The whole matter began to seem trivial, as if he had been away only for a month or two.

William McTurg was a man little given to talk. Even the coming back of a nephew did not cause any row of questions or reminiscences. They rode in silence. He sat a little bent forward, the lines held carelessly in his hands, his great lion-like head swaying to and fro with the movement of the buggy.

It all swept back upon Howard in a flood of names and faces and sights and sounds; something sweet and stirring somehow, though it had little of aesthetic charms at the time. They were passing along lanes now, between superb fields of corn, wherein plowmen were at work. Kingbirds few from post to post ahead of them; the insects called from the grass. The valley slowly outspread below them. The workmen in the fields were “turning out” for the night.

The heart of the young man swelled with pleasure almost like pain, and the eyes of the silent older man took on a far-off, dreaming look, as he gazed at the scene which had repeated itself a thousand times in his life, but of whose beauty he never spoke.

Far down to the left was the break in the wall through which the river ran on its way to join the Mississippi. They climbed slowly among the hills, and the valley they had left grew still more beautiful as the squalor of the little town was hid by the dusk of distance. Both men were silent for a long time.

Howard knew the peculiarities of his companion too well to make any remarks or ask any questions, and besides it was a genuine pleasure to ride with one who understood that silence was the only speech amid such splendors.

1 coolly—a small valley
2 valise—suitcase
3 drummer—salesperson
4 aesthetic—pertaining to beauty
1. What does the word *squalid* mean as used in the passage?
   A. neglected
   B. distant
   C. hectic
   D. bulky

2. Based on information in the passage, which conclusion can be made about life in Howard’s childhood town?
   A. Life is simple and characterized by hard work.
   B. Life is luxurious and distinguished by great wealth.
   C. Life is communal and filled with hectic social activities.
   D. Life is depressing and marked by unproductive idleness.

3. Which characteristic of the passage *best* indicates to the reader that it is fiction rather than nonfiction?
   A. the use of active verbs
   B. the use of paragraphs
   C. the development of a tone
   D. the development of a plot

4. Which sentence describes the relationship of the setting to the plot in the passage?
   A. The setting is important only at the beginning of the passage.
   B. The setting contributes little to the conclusion of the passage.
   C. The setting influences the progression of events in the passage.
   D. The setting prevents the resolution of the conflict in the passage.
5. Which sentence from the passage most clearly conveys a nostalgic tone?
   
   A. "It was about six o'clock as he caught sight of the splendid broken line of hills on which his baby eyes had looked thirty-five years ago."
   
   B. "The one main street ended at the hillside at his left, and stretched away to the north, between two rows of the usual village stores, unrelieved by a tree or a touch of beauty."
   
   C. "They climbed into the seat after William had lowered the buggy-top and unhitched the horse from the post."
   
   D. "They were passing along lanes now, between superb fields of corn, wherein plowmen were at work."

6. What effect does the third person limited point of view have on the passage?
   
   A. It allows the reader to understand the motives of William McTurg.
   
   B. It allows the reader to feel sympathy for the men near the salt-barrels.
   
   C. It allows the reader to feel dislike for the relatives plowing corn in the fields.
   
   D. It allows the reader to understand the feelings of Howard McLane.

7. This passage comes from *Main-Travelled Roads*, a book published in 1891. Which sentence describes the historical significance of the passage?
   
   A. It represents prairie life of the American Midwestern farmer during the pioneer movement.
   
   B. It shows the luxurious comfort of American train travel through the far Western states.
   
   C. It presents the splendor of the landscape of the Eastern part of America.
   
   D. It shows the value of education in the Western states of America.

8. What is the main effect of the dialect in the passage?
   
   A. It creates a sense of realism.
   
   B. It adds a touch of humor.
   
   C. It creates a dignified mood.
   
   D. It reveals a rivalry between characters.
9. Analyze what Howard’s thoughts throughout the passage reveal about his personality. Use information from the passage to support your analysis.