

“The Girl Who Loved the Sky” by Anita Endrezze

Outside the second-grade room,
the jacaranda tree blossomed
into purple lanterns, the papery petals
drifted, darkening the windows.
5 Inside, the room smelled like glue.
The desks were made of yellowed wood,
the tops littered with eraser rubbings,
rulers, and big fat pencils.
Colored chalk meant special days.
10 The walls were covered with precise
bright tulips and charts with shiny stars
by certain names. There, I learned
how to make butter by shaking a jar
until the pale cream clotted
15 into one sweet mass. There, I learned
that numbers were fractious beasts
with dens like dim zeros. And there,
I met a blind girl who thought the sky
tasted like cold metal when it rained
20 and whose eyes were always covered
with the bruised petals of her lids.
She loved the formless sky, defined
only by sounds, or the cool umbrellas
of clouds. On hot, still days
25 we listened to the sky falling
like chalk dust. We heard the noon
whistle of the pig-mash factory,
smelled the sourness of homebound men.
I had no father; she had no eyes;
30 we were best friends. The other girls
drew shaky hopscotch squares
on the dusty asphalt, talked about
pajama parties, weekend cookouts,
and parents who bought sleek-finned cars.
35 Alone, we sat in the canvas swings,
our shoes digging into the sand, then pushing,
until we flew high over their heads,
our hands streaked with red rust
from the chains that kept us safe.
40 I was born blind, she said, an act of nature.
Sure, I thought, like birds born

without wings, trees without roots.
I didn't understand. The day she moved
I saw the world clearly; the sky
45 backed away from me like a departing father.
I sat under the jacaranda, catching
the petals in my palm, enclosing them
until my fist was another lantern
hiding a small and bitter flame.

1. The speaker in this poem is
 - a. a blind woman looking back at her lonely childhood.
 - b. a popular girl in 2nd grade.
 - c. a girl who felt like an outsider.
 - d. a child who grew up feeling uneasy in the natural world.

2. In line 35, the poet uses the "alone" to convey that the speaker and the blind girl
 - a. have lost their parents.
 - b. are separated from their classmates.
 - c. are not supervised by their teacher.
 - d. are independent, self-confident children

3. The poet uses the word "papery" in image from lines 3-4 to show that the petals are
 - a. white.
 - b. stiff.
 - c. lightweight.
 - d. heavy.

4. Why does the speaker say "the sky backed away from me like a departing father" (lines 44-45)?
 - a. she is describing an approaching storm.
 - b. she is swinging and feeling sad as she thinks about her father.
 - c. the blind girl loves the sky, and the speaker feels that the girl's leaving is like the loss of her father.
 - d. she thinks her friend's blindness is unnatural, like a sky that moves away from you.

5. What mood is created by "the sky tasted like cold metal" (lines 18-19).
 - a. Melancholy
 - b. Playful
 - c. Tender
 - d. Violent

Constructed Response: Describe the poet's tone in this poem. Cite two specific lines to support your opinion.