

Casey at the Bat

by Ernest Lawrence Thayer

The outlook wasn't brilliant for the Mudville nine that day;
The score stood four to two with but one inning more to play.
And then when Cooney died at first, and Barrows did the same,
A sickly silence fell upon the patrons of the game.

A straggling few got up to go in deep despair. 5
The rest Clung to that hope which springs eternal in the human breast;
They thought if only Casey could but get a whack at that-
We'd put up even money now with Casey at the bat.

But Flynn preceded Casey, as did also Jimmy Blake, 10
And the former was a lulu and the latter was a cake;
So upon that stricken multitude grim melancholy sat,
For there seemed but little chance of Casey's getting to the bat.

But Flynn let drive a single, to the wonderment of all,
And Blake, the much despised, tore the cover off the ball;
And when the dust had lifted, and men saw what had occurred, 15
There was Jimmy safe at second and Flynn a-hugging third.

Then from 5,000 throats and more there rose a lusty yell;
It rumbled through the valley, it rattled in the dell;
It knocked upon the mountain and recoiled upon the flat,
For Casey, mighty Casey, was advancing to the bat. 20

There was ease in Casey's manner as he stepped into his place;
There was pride in Casey's bearing and a smile on Casey's face.
And when, responding to the cheers, he lightly doffed his hat,
No stranger in the crowd could doubt 'twas Casey at the bat.

Ten thousand eyes were on him as he rubbed his hands with dirt; 25
Five thousand tongues applauded when he wiped them on his shirt.
Then while the writhing pitcher ground the ball into his hip,
Defiance gleamed in Casey's eye, a sneer curled Casey's lip.

And now the leather-covered sphere came hurtling through the air,

And Casey stood a-watching it in haughty grandeur there. 30
Close by the sturdy batsman the ball unheeded sped-
"That ain't my style," said Casey. "Strike one," the umpire said.

From the benches, black with people, there went up a muffled roar,
Like the beating of the storm-waves on a stern and distant shore.
"Kill him! Kill the umpire!" shouted some one on the stand; 35
And it's likely they'd have killed him had not Casey raised his hand.

With a smile of Christian charity great Casey's visage shone;
He stilled the rising tumult; he bade the game go on;
He signaled to the pitcher, and once more the spheroid flew;
But Casey still ignored it, and the umpire said, "Strike two." 40

"Fraud!" cried the maddened thousands, and echo answered fraud;
But one scornful look from Casey and the audience was awed.
They saw his face grow stern and cold, they saw his muscles strain,
And they knew that Casey wouldn't let that ball go by again.

The sneer is gone from Casey's lip, his teeth are clinched in hate; 45
He pounds with cruel violence his bat upon the plate.
And now the pitcher holds the ball, and now he lets it go,
And now the air is shattered by the force of Casey's blow.

Oh, somewhere in this favored land the sun is shining bright;
The band is playing somewhere, and somewhere hearts are light, 50
And somewhere men are laughing, and somewhere children shout;
But there is no joy in Mudville-mighty Casey has struck out.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What is the crowd in Mudville watching?

- A. a TV show
- B. a play
- C. a movie
- D. a game

2. What is the climax of this poem?

- A. when Jimmy and Flynn get to second and third base (lines 13-16)
- B. when Casey stepped up to bat (lines 21-24)
- C. when Casey lets the first ball pass without swinging at it (lines 29-32)
- D. when Casey is taking a swing at the third ball (lines 45-48)

3. The people watching the baseball game felt that Casey could help the Mudville team win the game.

Which lines from the poem best support this conclusion?

- A. lines 1-4
- B. lines 5-8
- C. lines 13-16
- D. lines 29-32

4. Read lines 21-28 of the poem. How does Casey probably feel when he first steps up to bat?

- A. confident
- B. shy
- C. sleepy
- D. worried

5. What is the main idea of this poem?

- A. The people of Mudville think that Casey will lose the baseball game for his team, and Casey does lose the game.
- B. The people of Mudville think that Casey will lose the baseball game for his team, but Casey wins the game instead.
- C. The people of Mudville are sure that Casey will win the baseball game for his team, and Casey does win the game.
- D. The people of Mudville are sure that Casey will win the baseball game for his team, but Casey loses the game instead.

6. In the first half of the poem, the poet uses many similar phrases like "Casey at the bat" (line 8, line 24), "Casey getting to the bat" (line 12), and "Casey, mighty Casey, was advancing to the bat" (line 20). Why might the poet have used such similar phrases over and over?

- A. to show the reader that Casey is a very good baseball player
- B. to suggest that the people watching the game do not want Casey to bat
- C. to hint that Casey often bats during baseball games
- D. to make the reader get excited about Casey coming to bat

7. Read these stanzas from the poem.

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fraud;
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And they knew that Casey wouldn't let that ball go by again.
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In the second of these stanzas, the poet uses verbs in a different tense from all of the previous stanzas. How does the verb tense change between the previous stanzas and this second stanza?

- A. The previous stanzas were in past tense, and this stanza is in present tense.
- B. The previous stanzas were in present tense, and this stanza is in past tense.
- C. The previous stanzas were in future tense, and this stanza is in present tense.
- D. The previous stanzas were in present tense, and this stanza is in future tense.

8. Why is there no joy in Mudville at the very end of the poem?

9. Describe how the people watching the game feel when Casey is at the bat. Use evidence from the poem to support your answer.

10. Suspense is the state of nervousness or excitement that comes from being unsure about something. How does this poem create a feeling of suspense? Use evidence from the poem to support your answer.