**6th Grade ELA Final Exam Study Guide**

**Analyzing Text: Literature**

**The Highwayman**

**by Alfred Noyes**

1 The wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees.

The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas.

The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor,**1**

And the highwayman came riding—

Riding—riding—

The highwayman came riding, up to the old inn-door.

2 He'd a French cocked hat on his forehead, a bunch of lace at his chin,

A coat of the claret velvet, and breeches of brown doe-skin.

They fitted with never a wrinkle. His boots were up to the thigh.

And he rode with a jewelled twinkle,

His pistol butts a-twinkle,

His rapier hilt a-twinkle, under the jewelled sky.

3 Over the cobbles he clattered and clashed in the dark inn-yard.

He tapped with his whip on the shutters, but all was locked and barred.

He whistled a tune to the window, and who should be waiting there

But the landlord's black-eyed daughter,

Bess, the landlord's daughter,

Plaiting a dark red love-knot into her long black hair.

4 And dark in the dark old inn-yard a stable-wicket creaked

Where Tim the ostler**2** listened. His face was white and peaked.

His eyes were hollows of madness, his hair like moldy hay,

But he loved the landlord's daughter,

Bess, the landlord's daughter,

Dumb as a dog he listened, and he heard the robber say—

5 "One kiss my bonny sweetheart, I'm after a prize tonight,

But I shall be back with the yellow gold before the morning light;

Yet, if they press me sharply, and harry me through the day,

Then look for me by moonlight,

Watch for me by moonlight,

I'll come to thee by moonlight, though hell should bar the way."

6 He rose upright in the stirrups. He scarce could reach her hand,

But she loosened her hair in the casement. His face burnt like a brand**3**

As the black cascade of perfume came tumbling over his breast;

And he kissed its waves in the moonlight,

(O, sweet black waves in the moonlight)

Then he tugged at his rein in the moonlight, and galloped away to the west.

7 He did not come in the dawning. He did not come at noon;

And out of the tawny sunset, before the rise of the moon,

When the road was a gypsy's ribbon, looping the purple moor,

A red-coat troop came marching—

Marching—marching—

King George's men came marching, up to the old inn-door.

8 They said no word to the landlord. They drank his ale instead.

But they gagged his daughter, and bound her, to the foot of her narrow bed.

Two of them knelt at her casement, with muskets at their side!

There was death at every window;

And hell at one dark window;

For Bess could see, through her casement, the road that *he* would ride.

9 They tied her up to attention, with many a sniggering jest.

They had bound a musket beside her, with the muzzle beneath her breast!

"Now keep good watch!" and they kissed her. She heard the doomed man say—

*"Look for me by moonlight;*

*Watch for me by moonlight;*

*I'll come to thee by moonlight, though hell should bar the way!"*

10 She twisted her hands behind her, but all the knots held good!

She writhed her hands till her fingers were wet with sweat or blood!

They stretched and strained in the darkness, and the hours crawled by like years

Till, now, on the stroke of midnight,

Cold, on the stroke of midnight,

The tip of one finger touched it! The trigger at least was hers!

11 The tip of one finger touched it. She strove no more for the rest.

Up, she stood up to attention, with the muzzle beneath her breast.

She would not risk their hearing; she would not strive again;

For the road lay bare in the moonlight;

Blank and bare in the moonlight;

And the blood of her veins, in the moonlight, throbbed to her love's refrain.

12 *Tlot-tlot; tlot-tlot!* Had they heard it? The horsehoofs ringing clear;

*Tlot-tlot; tlot-tlot,* in the distance? Were they deaf that they did not hear?

Down the ribbon of moonlight, over the brow of the hill,

The highwayman came riding—

Riding—riding—

The red coats looked to their priming! She stood up, straight and still.

13 *Tlot-tlot*, in the frosty silence! *Tlot-tlot*, in the echoing night!

Nearer he came and nearer. Her face was like a light.

Her eyes grew wide for a moment; she drew one last deep breath,

Then her finger moved in the moonlight,

Her musket shattered the moonlight,

Shattered her breast in the moonlight and warned him—with her death.

14 He turned. He spurred to the west; he did not know who stood

Bowed, with her head o'er the musket, drenched with her own blood!

Not till the dawn he heard it, and his face grew grey to hear

How Bess, the landlord's daughter,

The landlord's black-eyed daughter,

Had watched for her love in the moonlight, and died in the darkness there.

15 Back, he spurred like a madman, shouting a curse to the sky,

With the white road smoking behind him and his rapier brandished high.

Blood red were his spurs in the golden noon; wine-red was his velvet coat;

When they shot him down on the highway,

Down like a dog on the highway,

And he lay in his blood on the highway, with a bunch of lace at his throat.

16 *And still of a winter's night, they say, when the wind is in the trees,*

*When the moon is a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,*

*When the road is a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor,*

*A highwayman comes riding—*

*Riding—riding—*

*A highwayman comes riding, up to the old inn-door.*

17 *Over the cobbles he clatters and clangs in the dark inn-yard.*

*He taps with his whip on the shutters, but all is locked and barred.*

*He whistles a tune to the window, and who should be waiting there*

*But the landlord's black-eyed daughter,*

*Bess, the landlord's daughter,*

*Plaiting a dark red love-knot into her long black hair.*

"The Highwayman" from *Poems* by Alfred Noyes, published by The Macmillan Company, 1913. Reprinted by permission of The Society of Authors as Literary Representatives of the Estate of Alfred Noyes.

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**1 moor:** open land covered with plants including coarse grass.

**2 ostler:** a man who works in a stable, caring for horses, especially one at an inn.

**3 brand:** a burning piece of wood.

**\*Point of View**

**\*Repetition**

**\*Author’s Purpose**

**\*Stanza**

**\*Suspense**

**\*Plot**

**Revising and Editing**

(1) "Hi, José, what are you doing here?" asked Brian.

(2) "I came to the park to play catch with my older brother, Tomás," José replied.

(3) "D'ya remember that little ole puppy I found last week?" (4) Brian pointed to a dog at the end of a leash he held. (5) "Well, just in case yer wonderin' what happened, lemme tell ya."

(6) "Sure, I remember," José said, bending down to pat the wriggling puppy. (7) "Lisa and me were there when you found her and showed her to us. (8) Are ya havin' any luck trainin' her, or ain'tcha?" (9) The dog yipped and tried to jump into José’s arms, but Brian pulled on the leash. (10) "Oh, she is really friendly, so I hope it's working out with her!" José exclaimed. (11) "Does she realize she's you dog now?"

(12) "Yes, this little dog cute as she is is smart!" Brian bragged. (13) "Although I admit that she's still kind of excitable. (14) But there's a new trick I just taught it to her yesterday that you should see. (15) Where's Lisa? (16) I want to show you both how my dog can give me a 'high five' when I hold up my hand. (17) I thought she was going to be here at the park."

(18) "Lisa's out shopping with those sisters of her's at the mall," José explained. (19) "You know that Lisa loving to shop as she does might be gone for some time! (20) Hey, you seem really happy with your new pet!"

(21) "The dog her name is Scout is great and loves meeting new people," Brian said. (22) "If Lisa's not around, I'll just show you the trick without Lisa here. (23) Here, Scout! (24) See how she comes when she's called?" Brian noted. (25) "Sit!" (26) Scout sat and looked at the two boys eagerly. (27) "Now for the trick," Brian announced. (28) He put out his hand in front of Scout. (29) "Hey, Scout, will ya gimme a high five, or won'tcha? (30) That's a good girl!"

**\*Pronouns**

**\*Sentence Structure**

**\*Contractions**

**\*Hyphens**

**\*Commas**

**\*Apostrophes**

**Analyzing Text: Literature**

***from* August 2026: There Will Come Soft Rains**

**by Ray Bradbury**

1 In the living room the voice-clock sang, Tick-tock, *seven o'clock, time to get up, time to get up, seven o'clock!* as if it were afraid that nobody would. The morning house lay empty. The clock ticked on, repeating and repeating its sounds into the emptiness. *Seven-nine, breakfast time, seven-nine!*

2 In the kitchen the breakfast stove gave a hissing sigh and ejected from its warm interior eight pieces of perfectly browned toast, eight eggs sunnyside up, sixteen slices of bacon, two coffees, and two cool glasses of milk.

3 "Today is August 4, 2026," said a second voice from the kitchen ceiling, "in the city of Allendale, California." It repeated the date three times for memory's sake. "Today is Mr. Featherstone's birthday. Today is the anniversary of Tilita's marriage. Insurance is payable, as are the water, gas, and light bills."

4 Somewhere in the walls, relays clicked, memory tapes glided under electric eyes.

5 *Eight-one, tick-tock, eight-one o'clock, off to school, off to work, run, run, eight-one!* But no doors slammed, no carpets took the soft tread of rubber heels. It was raining outside. The weather box on the front door sang quietly: "Rain, rain, go away; rubbers, raincoats for today …" And the rain tapped on the empty house, echoing.

6 Outside, the garage chimed and lifted its door to reveal the waiting car. After a long wait the door swung down again.

7 At eight-thirty the eggs were shriveled and the toast was like stone. An aluminum wedge scraped them into the sink, where hot water whirled them down a metal throat which digested and flushed them away to the distant sea. The dirty dishes were dropped into a hot washer and emerged twinkling dry.

8 *Nine-fifteen,* sang the clock, *time to clean.*

9 Out of warrens in the wall, tiny robot mice darted. The rooms were acrawl with the small cleaning animals, all rubber and metal. They thudded against chairs, whirling their mustached runners, kneading the rug nap, sucking gently at hidden dust. Then, like mysterious invaders, they popped into their burrows. Their pink electric eyes faded. The house was clean.

10 *Ten o'clock.* The sun came out from behind the rain. The house stood alone in a city of rubble and ashes. This was the one house left standing. At night the ruined city gave off a radioactive glow which could be seen for miles.

11 *Ten-fifteen.* The garden sprinklers whirled up in golden founts, filling the soft morning air with scatterings of brightness. The water pelted windowpanes, running down the charred west side where the house had been burned evenly free of its white paint. The entire west face of the house was black, save for five places. Here the silhouette in paint of a man mowing a lawn. Here, as in a photograph, a woman bent to pick flowers. Still farther over, their images burned on wood in one titanic instant, a small boy, hands flung into the air; higher up, the image of a thrown ball, and opposite him a girl, hands raised to catch a ball which never came down.

12 The five spots of paint—the man, the woman, the children, the ball—remained. The rest was a thin charcoaled layer.

13 The gentle sprinkler rain filled the garden with falling light.

14 Until this day, how well the house had kept its peace. How carefully it had inquired, "Who goes there? What's the password?" and, getting no answer from lonely foxes and whining cats, it had shut-up its windows and drawn shades in an old-maidenly preoccupation with self-protection which bordered on a mechanical paranoia.

15 It quivered at each sound, the house did. If a sparrow brushed a window, the shade snapped up. The bird, startled, flew off! No, not even a bird must touch the house.

16 The house was an altar with ten thousand attendants, big, small, servicing, attending, in choirs. But the gods had gone away, and the ritual of the religion continued senselessly, uselessly.

17 *Twelve noon.*

18 A dog whined, shivering, on the front porch.

19 The front door recognized the dog voice and opened. The dog, once huge and fleshy, but now gone to bone and covered with sores, moved in and through the house, tracking mud. Behind it whirred angry mice, angry at having to pick up mud, angry at inconvenience.

20 For not a leaf fragment blew under the door but what the wall panels flipped open and the copper scrap rats flashed swiftly out. The offending dust, hair, or paper, seized in miniature steel jaws, was raced back to the burrows. There, down tubes which fed into the cellar, it was dropped into the sighing vent of an incinerator which sat like evil Baal in a dark corner

21 The dog ran upstairs, hysterically yelping to each door, at last realizing, as the house realized, that only silence was here.

22 It sniffed the air and scratched the kitchen door. Behind the door, the stove was making pancakes which filled the house with a rich baked odor and the scent of maple syrup.

23 The dog frothed at the mouth, lying at the door, sniffing, its eyes turned to fire. It ran wildly in circles, biting at its tail, spun in a frenzy, and died. It lay in the parlor for an hour.

24 *Two o'clock,* sang a voice.

25 Delicately sensing decay at last, the regiments of mice hummed out as softly as blown gray leaves in an electrical wind.

26 *Two-fifteen.*

27 The dog was gone.

28 In the cellar, the incinerator glowed suddenly and a whirl of sparks leaped up the chimney.

29 *Two thirty-five.*

30 Bridge tables sprouted from patio walls. Playing cards fluttered onto pads in a shower of pips. Martinis manifested on an oaken bench with egg-salad sandwiches. Music played.

31 But the tables were silent and the cards untouched.

32 At four o'clock the tables folded like great butterflies back through the paneled walls.

33 *Four-thirty.*

34 The nursery walls glowed.

35 Animals took shape: yellow giraffes, blue lions, pink antelopes, lilac panthers cavorting in crystal substance. The walls were glass. They looked out upon color and fantasy. Hidden films clocked through well-oiled sprockets, and the walls lived. The nursery floor was woven to resemble a crisp, cereal meadow. Over this ran aluminum roaches and iron crickets, and in the hot still air butterflies of delicate red tissue wavered among the sharp aroma of animal spoors! There was the sound like a great matted yellow hive of bees within a dark bellows, the lazy bumble of a purring lion. And there was the patter of okapi feet and the murmur of a fresh jungle rain, like other hoofs, falling upon the summer-starched grass. Now the walls dissolved into distances of parched weed, mile on mile, and warm endless sky. The animals drew away into thorn brakes and water holes.

36 It was the children's hour.

37 *Five o'clock.* The bath filled with clear hot water.

38 *Six, seven, eight o'clock.* The dinner dishes manipulated like magic tricks, and in the study a *click.* In the metal stand opposite the hearth where a fire now blazed up warmly, a cigar popped out, half an inch of soft gray ash on it, smoking, waiting.

39 *Nine o'clock.* The beds warmed their hidden circuits, for nights were cool here.

40 *Nine-five.* A voice spoke from the study ceiling:

41 "Mrs. McClellan, which poem would you like this evening?"

42 The house was silent.

43 The voice said at last, "Since you express no preference, I shall select a poem at random." Quiet music rose to back the voice. "Sara Teasdale. As I recall, your favorite.…

44 "*There will come soft rains and the smell of the ground,*

*And swallows circling with their shimmering sound;*

45 *And frogs in the pools singing at night,*

*And wild plum trees in tremulous white;*

46 *Robins will wear their feathery fire,*

*Whistling their whims on a low fence-wire;*

47 *And not one will know of the war, not one*

*Will care at last when it is done.*

48 *Not one would mind, neither bird nor tree,*

*If mankind perished utterly;*

49 *And Spring herself, when she woke at dawn*

*Would scarcely know that we were gone.*"

50 The fire burned on the stone hearth and the cigar fell away into a mound of quiet ash on its tray. The empty chairs faced each other between the silent walls, and the music played.

51 At ten o'clock the house began to die.

52 The wind blew. A falling tree bough crashed through the kitchen window. Cleaning solvent, bottled, shattered over the stove. The room was ablaze in an instant!

53 "Fire! " screamed a voice. The house lights flashed, water pumps shot water from the ceilings. But the solvent spread on the linoleum, licking, eating, under the kitchen door, while the voices took it up in chorus: "Fire, fire, fire!"

54 The house tried to save itself. Doors sprang tightly shut, but the windows were broken by the heat and the wind blew and sucked upon the fire.

55 The house gave ground as the fire in ten billion angry sparks moved with flaming ease from room to room and then up the stairs. While scurrying water rats squeaked from the walls, pistoled their water, and ran for more. And the wall sprays let down showers of mechanical rain.

56 But too late. Somewhere, sighing, a pump shrugged to a stop. The quenching rain ceased. The reserve water supply which had filled baths and washed dishes for many quiet days was gone.

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**\*Point of View \*Paraphrase \*Inference \*Personification**

**\*Irony \*Excerpt \*Imagery**

**Analyzing Text: Informational Text**

**Children Need Team Sports**

**by Angela Morris**

1 Park officials have proposed limited participation in summer sports leagues because of lack of space. Leaving some children out of sports leagues is a terrible idea. In addition to the benefits of exercise, playing a team sport teaches children lessons that they will use throughout their lives and will make them better adults and more productive employees.

2 When I was young, I joined a summer softball league. After several weeks of practice, a fly ball came to me during a real game. My knees started to shake, but I did what I'd learned, put out my glove, and plop—the ball landed squarely in my cheap little mitt. From that moment on, I considered myself a real player. I practiced everything: pitching, batting, throwing, fielding. I only did a few of these things well, but I improved in all of them. That wasn't the only thing softball taught me.

3 One day I took my new bat to a game. A girl from the other team picked it up to bat with it. I immediately went to my coach and asked him to stop her from using my bat because it was only for my teammates and me. I wasn't about to let an opponent use it.

4 My coach looked at me and said something I'll never forget. "I thought this game was to see which team played softball better, not which team had the better equipment." He was right. Since then, I have had many opportunities to apply this approach in other areas of life, including what is fair and what isn't.

5 When my team lost the championship game by only one run, I held my tears until I got home. Then, even though I was eleven, I collapsed onto my father's lap and wept like a baby. "Sharon cost us the game," I cried. "She swung at a pitch that was clearly not a strike. She ended the game. Ended it and lost it!"

6 My father patted my back gently but spoke firmly. "No one person wins a team game," he said, "and no one person loses it." I thought about that for a moment. Many of our batters had struck out during the game. Like my coach, my father was right. And I've been a better "team player" at work as an adult as a result of their lessons.

7 Glee club, debate club, and many other activities can be important. However, in my opinion, there is nothing like playing a team sport to help children learn valuable life lessons. Some people argue that team sports encourage a "group mentality" point of view and it is more important to learn to be an independent individual. To them I would say that we have many opportunities to learn the value of depending on ourselves, such as when we write a paper, read an assignment, or take a test. In the meantime, we live and function in groups—family, classroom, coworkers, and society. We need opportunities to recognize the value of working together.

8 In addition, a team sport teaches one to respect other people. One girl on our team was clumsy and awkward and, in general, a terrible player. But she played her heart out, and she never gave up. My memory of her work ethic and positive attitude has inspired me throughout my life.

9 The city council will meet this week to vote on building new parks and fields. I want to encourage everyone to support the idea of spending money where it will have an important and valuable effect—on the facilities we need to promote team sports.

**\*Editorial \*Opinion**

**\*Writers Claim \*Appeal**

**\*Anecdote \* Counterargument**

**\*Compare/Contrast**