**Unit 3**/Standards Assessment Theme and Symbolism English I

**Directions: Read the following selections and examine the visual representation. Then answer the questions that follow.**

**The Wild Duck’s Nest**

Michael McLaverty

The sun was setting, spilling gold light on the low western hills of Rathlin Island. A small boy walked jauntily along a hoof-printed path that wriggled between the folds of these hills and opened out into a crater-like valley on the cliff-top. Presently he stopped as if remembering something, then suddenly he left the path and began running up one of the hills. When he reached the top he was out of breath and stood watching streaks of light radiating from golden-edged clouds, the scene reminding him of a picture he had seen of the Transfiguration. A short distance below him was the cow standing at the edge of a reedy lake. Colm ran down to meet her waving his stick in the air, and the wind rumbling in his ears made him give an exultant whoop which splashed upon the hills in a shower of echoed sound. A flock of gulls lying on the short grass near the lake rose up languidly, drifting like blown snowflakes over the rim of the cliff.

The lake faced west and was fed by a stream, the drainings of the semi- circling hills. One side was open to the winds from the sea and in winter a little outlet trickled over the cliffs making a black vein in their gray sides. The boy lifted stones and began throwing them into the lake, weaving web after web on its calm surface. Then he skimmed the water with flat stones, some of them jumping the surface and coming to rest on the other side. He was delighted with himself and after listening to his echoing shouts of delight he ran to fetch his cow. Gently he tapped her on the side and reluctantly she went towards the brown-mudded path that led out of the valley. The boy was about to throw a final stone into the lake when a bird flew low over his head, its neck astrain, and its orange-colored legs clear in the soft light. It was a wild duck. It circled the lake twice, thrice, coming lower each time and then with a nervous flapping of wings it skidded along the surface, its legs breaking the water into a series of silvery arcs. Its wings closed, it lit silently, gave a slight shiver, and began pecking indifferently at the water.

Colm, with dilated eyes, eagerly watched it making for the farther end of the lake. It meandered between tall bulrushes, its body black and solid as stone against the graying water. Then as if it had sunk it was gone. The boy ran stealthily along the bank looking away from the lake, pretending indifference. When he came opposite to where he had last seen the bird he stopped and peered through the sighing reeds whose shadows streaked the water in a maze of black strokes. In front of him was a soddy islet guarded by the spears of sedgeand separated from the bank by a narrow channel of water. The water wasn’t too deep—he could wade across with care.

Rolling up his short trousers he began to wade, his arms outstretched, and his legs brown in the mountain water. As he drew near the islet, his feet sank in the cold mud and bubbles winked up at him. He went more carefully and nervously. Then one trouser leg fell and dipped into the water; the boy dropped his hands to roll it up, he unbalanced, made a splashing sound, and the bird arose with a squawk and whirred away over the cliffs. For a moment the boy stood frightened. Then he clambered on to the wet-soaked sod of land, which was spattered with sea gulls’ feathers and bits of wind-blown rushes.

Into each hummock he looked, pulling back the long grass. At last he came on the nest, facing seawards. Two flat rocks dimpled the face of the water and between them was a neck of land matted with coarse grass containing the nest. It was untidily built of dried rushes, straw and feathers, and in it lay one solitary egg. Colm was delighted. He looked around and saw no one. The nest was his. He lifted the egg, smooth and green as the sky, with a faint tinge of yellow like the reflected light from a buttercup; and then he felt he had done wrong. He put it back. He knew he shouldn’t have touched it and he wondered would the bird forsake the nest. A vague sadness stole over him and he felt in his heart he had sinned. Carefully smoothing out his footprints he hurriedly left the islet and ran after his cow. The sun had now set and the cold shiver of evening enveloped him, chilling his body and saddening his mind.

In the morning he was up and away to school. He took the grass rut that edged the road for it was softer on the bare feet. His house was the last on the western headland and after a mile or so he was joined by Paddy McFall; both boys dressed in similar hand-knitted blue jerseys and gray trousers, carried home-made school bags. Colm was full of the nest and as soon as he joined his companion he said eagerly: “Paddy, I’ve a nest—a wild duck’s with one egg.”

“And how do you know it’s a wild duck’s?” asked Paddy, slightly jealous.

“Sure I saw her with my own two eyes, her brown speckled back with a crow’s patch on it, and her yellow legs—”

“Where is it?” interrupted Paddy in a challenging tone.

“I’m not going to tell you, for you’d rob it!”

“Aach! I suppose it’s a tame duck’s you have or maybe an old gull’s.”

Colm put out his tongue at him. “A lot you know!” he said, “for a gull’s egg has spots and this one is greenish-white, for I had it in my hand.”

And then the words he didn’t want to hear rushed from Paddy in a mocking chant, “You had it in your hand! . . . She’ll forsake it! She’ll forsake it! She’ll forsake it!” he said, skipping along the road before him.

Colm felt as if he would choke or cry with vexation.

His mind told him that Paddy was right, but somehow he couldn’t give in to it and he replied: “She’ll not forsake it! She’ll not. I know she’ll not!”

But in school his faith wavered. Through the windows he could see moving sheets of rain—rain that dribbled down the panes filling his mind with thoughts of the lake creased and chilled by wind; the nest sodden and black with wetness; and the egg cold as a cave stone. He shivered from the thoughts and fidgeted with the inkwell cover, sliding it backwards and forwards mechanically. The mischievous look had gone from his eyes and the school day dragged on interminably. But at last they were out in the rain, Colm rushing home as fast as he could.

He was no time at all at his dinner of potatoes and salted fish until he was out in the valley now smoky with drifts of slanting rain. Opposite the islet he entered the water. The wind was blowing into his face, rustling noisily the rushes heavy with the dust of rain. A moss-cheeper, swaying on a reed like a mouse, filled the air with light cries of loneliness.

The boy reached the islet, his heart thumping with excitement, wondering did the bird forsake. He went slowly, quietly, on to the strip of land that led to the nest. He rose on his toes, looking over the ledge to see if he could see her. And then every muscle tautened. She was on, her shoulders hunched up, and her bill lying on her breast as if she were asleep. Colm’s heart hammered wildly in his ears. She hadn’t forsaken. He was about to turn stealthily away. Something happened. The bird moved, her neck straightened, twitching nervously from side to side. The boy’s head swam with lightness. He stood transfixed. The wild duck with a panicky flapping, rose heavily, and flew off towards the sea. . . . A guilty silence enveloped the boy. . . . He turned to go away, hesitated, and glanced back at the bare nest; it’d be no harm to have a look. Timidly he approached it; standing straight, and gazing over the edge. There in the nest lay two eggs. He drew in his breath with delight, splashed quickly from the island, and ran off whistling in the rain.

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**Hunters Save Wetlands**

**Doris Jencks**

The average city dweller might reasonably assume that hunters have no interest in wildlife conservation. That person might therefore be surprised to learn that, by buying their annual hunting licenses, U.S. duck hunters help pay for the preservation of wetlands, a critical habitat for migrating birds.

**Wetland Characteristics**

Simply put, wetlands are a mix of water and land. They are areas that fall between deep-water environments, such as oceans, rivers, and lakes, and drained land that is usually dry, such as forests and grasslands. Wetlands in the United States have been called by many names, including swales, sloughs, bays, pools, kettles, tide flats, marshes, lowlands, flood plains, muskegs, swamps, fens, and bogs. Technically, any land that is under water—and saturated—during most or part of the year is a wetland. Some wetlands are enormous, created by retreating glaciers thousands of years ago. Others are small and temporary, with land that appears as floating islands during the wettest months. Some wetlands form above caves; others form at river deltas.

People once considered wetlands to be wastelands because of their goopy, smelly soil. With hordes of insects, these areas could also be unpleasant. Whereas Native Americans treated wetlands as bounteous food sources, European settlers eradicated vast areas of wetlands as they moved west. Between the early 1600s and the year 2000, one-half of the wetlands in the United States disappeared due to human activities. Farmers plowed up marsh grasses and drained the land so they could plant grain. Developers filled in wet areas with soil so they could build homes.

For example, at the 32,000-acre Horicon Marsh in Wisconsin, settlers first built a dam to reduce flooding. Then they dug ditches to drain the land further. Once they planted crops, manure they used for fertilizer polluted the remaining water. The dried-out land regularly caught fire, turning what was once home to all manner of living thing into a smoking wasteland.

However, beginning in the 1930s, as dams were being built around the country to generate hydropower, people also started to appreciate wetlands as valuable natural systems. In the 1960s, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, once the nation’s leading flood-control agency, became a leading agency for environmental restoration. The Clean Water Act of 1972 included some of the first laws intended to protect wetlands.

* Wetlands have several key ecological functions.
* Wetlands filter impurities from water. Nutrients from fertilizers and crops settle into wetland sediments, where plant roots can take them up and recycle them.
* Wetlands absorb waters that otherwise might flood communities and farmland. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that one acre of wetland can store up to 1.5 million gallons of floodwater.
* Wetlands reduce soil erosion by supporting plants with roots that hold sediment in place.
* Wetlands provide habitats for fish and other animals. The diversity of species that live in wetlands is similar to that in tropical rain forests and coral reefs.

Wetland plants provide food for animals as small as beetles and snails and as large as beavers and muskrats. Wetlands are rich in mollusks, worms, insects, fish, and amphibians. These abundant food sources attract birds, carnivorous mammals, and reptiles. It makes sense that many wetlands are on the migratory pathways of birds that rely on them for nesting sites and food. In fact, nearly fifty percent of North American bird species depend on wetlands for part or all of each year.

**“Duck Stamps”**

As Bill Volkert of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources once wrote, the shift in how people have viewed wetlands reflects “a human history that could not unearth more abundance than nature gave us.” As early as the hydropower boom of the 1930s, the U.S. government began promoting conservation programs. One way of funding wetlands conservation is the sale of “Duck Stamps,” the common name of the Federal Migratory Bird Conservation and Hunting Stamp. These stamps— designed through national art competitions—serve as the annual licenses hunters must buy in order to shoot migrating waterfowl, including ducks.

Since 1934, approximately 120 million Duck Stamps have been sold, generating more than $700 million. Ninety-eight percent of the revenue from Duck Stamps funds preservation of wetlands habitats. Since the program’s inception, the money has been used to purchase or lease over 5.2 million acres of wetlands that become part of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The Duck Stamp has come to symbolize the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service’s wetlands programs. These days, conservationists and bird lovers buy twenty-five percent of Duck Stamps. With the stamp, they can get free admission to the National Wildlife Refuges. They also know that they are doing something for the environment.

The Federal Duck Stamp Program doesn’t stop there. In 1989, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation funded development of an arts curriculum called the Federal Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program. The Junior Duck Stamp program teaches students from kindergarten through high school about conserving wetlands and waterfowl. To do so, it blends scientific and wildlife management principles with visual arts. Piloted in California in 1990, the program now helps support ongoing environmental education for nearly 28,000 students throughout the United States and its territories.

Each year, each state holds a Junior Duck Stamp competition, and the national Junior Duck Stamp image is always selected from the state contest winners. Junior Duck stamps sell for $5. Proceeds from the sale support education programs as well as awards and scholarships that recognize participating students, teachers, and schools.

Once winners of the annual Duck Stamp and Junior Duck Stamp competitions are chosen, the Federal Duck Stamp Office and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service design the stamps. The designs are then evaluated and produced by the U.S. Postal Service. Duck Stamps are released to the public every July 1.

Far from focusing on sport alone, today’s duck hunters continue a tradition of preserving habitats for migrating birds. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service estimates that one-third of the country’s endangered and threatened species “find food or shelter in refuges established using Federal Duck Stamp funds.”

**Directions: Use “The Wild Duck’s Nest” to answer 1-6.**

1. The hopefulness of life is symbolized by
   1. The cries of the moss-cheeper
   2. The duck as it flies toward the sea
   3. Colm’s conflict with Paddy
   4. The second egg in the nest
2. Which is the theme of the story?
   1. Animals and humans do not get along
   2. Young boys can be mean
   3. Life can be easily destroyed
   4. Sunsets are beautiful to watch
3. Which detail is a clue to the story’s theme?
   1. Colm fears that he has caused the egg to somehow die.
   2. Paddy is jealous of Colm’s finding the egg.
   3. The wild duck flies away from Colm.
   4. Colm enjoys watching the sunset.
4. The wild duck’s egg is a symbol of
   1. Nature’s beauty
   2. People’s control
   3. Life’s value
   4. Colm’s guilt
5. In lines 80-81, the wet nest and cold egg convey the idea of
   1. Winter
   2. Death
   3. Doubt
   4. Anger
6. Which of the following is part of the setting that helps build the theme?
   1. The grass that protects the nest
   2. The dinner of potatoes and fish
   3. The neighbor by, Paddy McFall
   4. The sound of the wind in Colm’s ears

**Directions: Use “Hunters Save Wetlands” to answer questions 12-22.**

1. Which statement expresses an implied main idea of the selection?
   1. Hunters help protect migrating birds.
   2. Young people can save endangered ducks.
   3. A wetland is very safe for animals.
   4. Without wetlands, there would be a lot more floods.
2. The article implies that engineers could manage wetlands to reduce.
   1. Wildfires
   2. Housing
   3. Flooding
   4. Farming

**Directions: Use both the story and the article to answer the following questions.**

1. The story and the article share a theme of
   1. Destroying wildlife in order to prosper
   2. Appreciating the vulnerability of life
   3. Standing up to persistent bullies
   4. Creating beauty from cruel experiences
2. In both selections, a duck symbolizes
   1. Parenthood
   2. Danger
   3. Wildlife
   4. Creativity