

8th Grade ELA Activity: January

1)

Read the text and answer the questions.

Master of Beautiful Music by Ellen Seiden

The following text describes the music camp run by world famous violinist Itzhak Perlman and his wife, Toby.

From personal experience, Mr. Perlman advises students that in order to succeed in music, art, or anything outside of "normal" activities, "First of all, you have to love what you do. That's number one. And number two, you have to have some sort of discipline. I always felt I was more successful when I had a routine . . . routine is much easier. You spend a certain time of the day doing A and a certain time of the day doing B. In music, for example, no matter how much of a gift you have, practicing is very important, so if you're serious, you have to practice. Being programmed, in some ways, is very, very effective. And as long as you program in some free time, just to rest, then you're O.K. Whatever the extracurricular activities, dancing or sports or music, if you're programmed up to the gills, as a result—at least I found this in my case—you can lose enjoyment."

Young, musically talented students can put into practice what Mr. Perlman preaches when they attend the noteworthy, nurturing summer program founded in 1995 by his wife, Toby, also an accomplished violinist. At the Perlman Music Program in East Hampton, New York, led by a handpicked, caring faculty, tomorrow's professional musicians from the ages of eleven to eighteen play to their heart's content.

Special features make this two-week August sleep-away program different and unusual. As Mrs. Perlman, the artistic director, explained to me, "One of the unique aspects of our program is that we are small, only thirty-five students, and small means intimate. I always know what's going on with each child." She continued, "Second, the playing level is very high, but it's highly noncompetitive." Instead of auditioning for seats in the orchestra according to ability, as is tradition, "Our kids are seated in the section randomly. Often the smallest gets to sit in front," she said, laughing. Participants know there is no penalty for musical problems, and that Toby's motto, "If you don't do well, it doesn't mean it's your fault," rules.

"We care about the total child. We try to create a healthy, happy, normal environment during their stay. It doesn't mean they don't work really hard, but there's a lot of talking that goes on. They come to us and suddenly they're a part of a community, a family, and they find out that many of the feelings they have are shared by other kids. It's very nice." The students, who come from all over the world, attend a weekly dinner at the Perlman's house, themed to discuss such issues as dealing with stage fright. All students must also sing in the chorus, where they harmonize and experience a different form of musical expression. Time for recreational sports and arts and crafts rounds out the program.

The children are at first awed by, and then come to accept, the active involvement of famous musicians in their training. Often, Itzhak Perlman and other masters such as violinist/violist/conductor Pinchas Zukerman and pianist Emanuel Ax drop in to work with the students. Itzhak Perlman explained, "Not many children have that camp experience, not only to be taught by world-class artists, but also to participate in playing and performing with them. We also have an orchestra made up of all the kids, and I try to conduct and coach them." Invited to attend rehearsals, people who live in the community during the summer, such as Steven Spielberg and his family, stop by to listen. Mr. Spielberg became the first major contributor to future expansion plans for the Perlman Music Program. Mrs. Perlman said, "At the end of the session, we have two concerts. One is an evening of orchestral and choral music, and then we have a chamber music marathon. It starts at 11:00 in the morning on the last day, and the playing goes on until we finish!"

Intensely proud of her program, Toby Perlman enthusiastically states that "It's like a fairy tale program, it's so wonderful. No matter what I say about it, I can't put into words what it feels like, tastes like, and smells like when you're there. Everybody who comes to visit gets it. They're there for a minute and a half and they want to stay forever. We're lucky to have such a wonderful faculty and wonderful kids."

Reflecting on his own training and lengthy career as a professional musician, Mr. Perlman believes that he, too, has earned the right to some time off every now and then. "I can take vacation from music for a while when I just want to relax," he said and chuckled. But he did caution, "The important thing is not to go on vacation while you do your music, or while you do anything else in the arts. Once I play, I have to be, and I am, really committed to it. Your audience can sense this . . . it has to be really given, it has to be felt across the stage. One should not be a passenger in music, getting on the notes and riding them. One has to always feel that one is re-creating something, that there's a spontaneity all the time. The main challenge for a musician is to play something for the five hundredth time and make your audience think that you're playing it for the first time."

A modest man, Itzhak Perlman remarked on himself and his tremendous talent, "I don't think there's anything unusual. People say 'You're amazing,' but I say that I do whatever I am capable of doing. The important thing is to know what you're capable of and do it. That's all."

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1)

This question has two parts. First, answer part A. Then, answer part B.

Part A

Click on the statement that **best** provides an inference that can be made about the author's opinion of the Perlman Music Program.

- A. The Perlman Music Program is limited in its value because of how few students it accepts.
- B. The Perlman Music Program is most suitable for students who would not do well in a competitive environment.
- C. The Perlman Music Program offers students a unique opportunity to learn from accomplished musicians in a nurturing setting.
- D. The Perlman Music Program offers students a unique opportunity to learn new instruments from experienced orchestral musicians.

Part B

Click on the section from the text that **best** supports your answer in part A. Choose **one** option.

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2)

The reader can infer that the Perlman's believe in both practice and passion.

Which sentence from the text **best** supports this inference?

- A. "First of all, you have to love what you do. That's number one. And number two, you have to have some sort of discipline."

B. "All students must also sing in the chorus, where they harmonize and experience a different form of musical expression. Time for recreational sports and arts and crafts rounds out the program."

C. "Mrs. Perlman said, 'At the end of the session, we have two concerts. One is an evening of orchestral and choral music, and then we have a chamber music marathon.'"

D. "Everybody who comes to visit gets it. They're there for a minute and a half and they want to stay forever."