

# Reading Work Sample Assessment

## Ex-Basketball Player

### Instructions:

Read the following poem carefully and make notes in the margin as you read. Your notes should include:

- Comments that show that you **understand** the selection. (A summary or statement of the main idea of important ideas may serve this purpose.)
- Questions you have that show what you are **wondering** about as you read.
- Notes that show what you can tell about **main ideas, details, character interactions and beliefs.**
- Observations about the **writer's strategies** (organization, figurative language, dialogue, word choice, point of view) and how the writer's choices affect the meaning.

Your **margin notes** are part of your score for this assessment.

Student \_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher \_\_\_\_\_  
School \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
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Though John Updike is now as one of America's greatest novelists, he also published eight books of poetry. This poem, *Ex-Basketball Player*, is an example of Updike's skill in portraying someone living in an American small town.

### Ex-Basketball Player

By John Updike

Pearl Avenue runs past the high-school lot,  
Bends with the trolley tracks, and stops, cut off  
Before it has a chance to go two blocks,  
At Colonel McComsky Plaza. Berth's Garage  
Is on the corner facing west, and there,  
Most days, you'll find Flick Webb, who helps Berth out.

Flick stand tall among the idiot pumps—  
Five on a side, the old bubble-head style,  
Their rubber elbows hanging loose and low.  
One's nostrils are two S's, and his eyes  
An E and O.\* And one is squat, without  
A head at all—more of a football type.

Once Flick played for the high-school team, the Wizards.  
He was good: in fact, the best. In '46  
He bucketed three hundred ninety points,  
A county record still. The ball loved Flick.  
I saw him rack up thirty-eight or forty  
In one home game. His hands were like wild birds.

He never learned a trade, he just sells gas,  
Checks oil and changes flats. Once in a while,  
As a gag, he dribbles an inner tube,  
But most of us remember anyway.

Notes on my thoughts,  
observations, reactions and questions:

I like how they  
describe this  
paragraph. It's  
very descriptive,

Easy to image  
what this paragraph  
is talking about,

Very descriptive  
of what flicks  
hands look like.

His hands are fine and nervous on the lug wrench.  
It makes no difference to the lug wrench, though.

Off work, he hands around Mae's Luncheonette.  
Grease-gray and kind of coiled, he plays pinball  
Smokes those thin cigars, nurses lemon phosphates.  
Flick seldom says a word to Mae, just nods  
Beyond her face toward bright applauding tiers

Of Necco Wafers, Nibs, and Juju Beads.

*Notes on my thoughts,  
observations, reactions and  
questions:*

This paragraph  
confused me. Did  
not feel like it  
went with the  
poem.

\*"Esso" was a common brand of gasoline in the 1940s and 1950s.

### Demonstrate Understanding

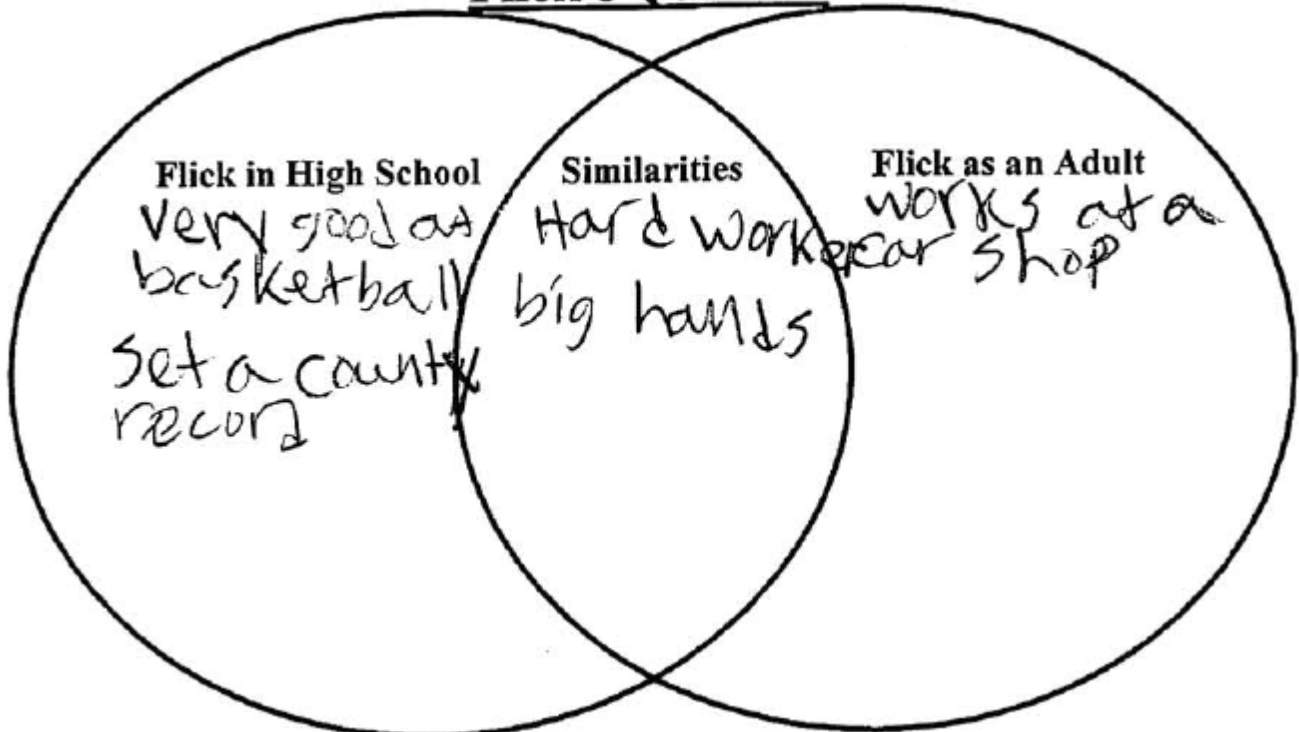
1. If you were explaining the poem, *ex-Basketball Player*, to someone who had not read it, what would you say? Write a summary of this poem.

say? Write a summary of this poem. If I were to summarize this poem to someone, I would say this poem is about Flick in high school to Flick as an adult working at a car shop.

### Demonstrate Understanding

2. Use the Venn diagram below to demonstrate some of Flick's qualities when he was in high school and Flick's qualities as an adult.

### Flick's Qualities



### Develop an Interpretation

3. What message or messages in this poem is John Updike hoping to convey in his poem? Explain the clues in the poem that helped you decide this.

clues in the poem that helped you decide this. The message John Updike wants us to take away from this poem is that when you go through life, life will change rapidly. The clue that helped me decide this was when Updike said Flick never learned a trade.

### Develop an Interpretation

4. Based on information in *Ex-Basketball Player*, what do you think is most likely to happen in the next few years to Flick? Be sure to support your answer with information from the poem.

few years to Flick? Be sure to support your answer with information from the poem. The most likely thing that is going to happen to Flick in the next couple of years is he is going to go back to college and start playing basketball again. What supports my answer is that Flick was really good at basketball in high school.

### Analyze Text

5. Updike mentions Flick's hands several times in this poem. What is the effect on the poem's meaning / message?

The Author's purpose of talking about Flick's hands are, the Author wants you to imagine how fast Flick's hands are.

### Analyze Text

6. What is Updike's purpose in using personification in the second stanza? What is the effect on the poem's meaning / message?

poem's meaning / message? Updike's purpose to use personification was for us to imagine what he is trying to describe to us in the paragraph.

### Analyze Text

7. Ex-Basketball Player is a poem that is bursting with images and ideas. Use the space below to discuss anything else that you have noticed that interests you in this poem?

anything else that you have noticed that interests you in this poem. This poem was a very describing poem. It was a very easy poem to understand and follow. There was some very good ideas and was easy to imagine what the poem was talking about. Some other things that I noticed were this could totally be someone's real life.