

Quiz: “Just Walk on By: Black Men and Public Space” by Brent Staples

1. Staples’s opening line (“My first victim was a woman.”) – potentially suspenseful and a little daunting – proves to be somewhat
 - a. Satirical
 - b. Ironic
 - c. Idiosyncratic
 - d. Demonstrative
2. What does Staples refer to as his “unwieldy inheritance”?
 - a. looking like a mugger
 - b. life in the ghetto
 - c. poverty
 - d. the ability to alter public space

3. Read the following paragraph: “In that first year, my first away from my hometown, I was to become thoroughly familiar with the language of fear. At dark, shadowy intersections, I could cross in front of a car stopped at a traffic light and elicit the *thunk, thunk, thunk, thunk* of the driver – black, white, male, or female – hammering down the door locks. On less traveled streets after dark, I grew accustomed to but never comfortable with people crossing to the other side of the street rather than pass me. Then there were the standard unpleasanties with policemen, doormen, bouncers, cabdrivers, and others whose business it is to screen out troublesome individuals *before* there is any nastiness.”

The paragraph above contains all of the following devices or strategies except

- a. Onomatopoeia
 - b. Imagery
 - c. Appositives
 - d. Polysyndeton
4. What was Staples doing when an office manager mistook him for a burglar and called security?
 - a. touring the building
 - b. interviewing for a job
 - c. selling magazines
 - d. turning in a story just before its deadline
 5. In context, the word taut most nearly means: “... – in SoHo, for example, where sidewalks are narrow and tightly spaced buildings shut out the sky – things can get very taut indeed”
 - a. suspenseful
 - b. intriguing
 - c. tense
 - d. robust
 6. Staples writes that over the years he has learned to smother the rage, and he believes that not to do so would surely have led to what?
 - a. assault
 - b. madness
 - c. resentment
 - d. trouble

7. Which of the following is not one of the things Staples does to make himself less threatening?
 - a. whistle classical melodies on late evening walks
 - b. allow skittish people clear a room before he goes in the same direction as them
 - c. give wide berth to nervous people on subway platforms during the wee hours
 - d. wear his press credentials and police badge everywhere he goes

8. Staples describes one of the above actions as “equivalent of the cowbell that hikers wear when they know they are in bear country.” What makes this description most effective?
 - a. The hiker represents Staples (victim), whereas bear country represents society (perpetrator).
 - b. The tone of the analogy alleviates the serious nature of the essay.
 - c. The vivid description allows readers to better visualize what Staples goes through day after day.
 - d. The essay begins and ends with this comparison, making it especially poignant.

Select the correct vocabulary word for the given description.

A. Affluent	F. Tyranny
B. Uninflammatory	G. Foyer
C. Billowing	H. Errant
D. Unwieldy	I. Solace
E. Quarry	J. Perilous

9. The massive houses in the ___ neighborhood stood in sharp contrast to the broken- down shanties in the neighborhood behind it.

10. The _____ remarks gave her no reason to worry about an altercation; they were kind and reassuring.

11. The small marble room at the entrance of the building greeted us with the shining light of its crystal chandelier.

12. The filmy white curtains swelled and floated gently in the soft Mediterranean breeze.

13. In paragraph 2, “the unwieldy inheritance...to alter public space in ugly ways” implies—
 - a. People are uncomfortable in southern Chicago.
 - b. The Staples family was poor and didn’t leave young Staples money.
 - c. Staples receive a large inheritance.
 - d. Centuries-old fear of a black man’s mere presence can make people feel threatened.

14. You can conclude that in paragraph 3, the_____, “the language of fear,” creates the analogy.
 - a. metaphor
 - b. contradiction
 - c. simile
 - d. paradox

15. Why does Staples whistle melodies by Beethoven and Vivaldi?
 - a. He loved classical music when he grew older.
 - b. It’s the only way that he could express his disappointment about his treatment.
 - c. He is ashamed of his ability to alter public space.
 - d. Doing so made him seem less intimidating.