



Practitioner submitted tasks: Prepared for the Project, Teaching to Fish (Build Tasks) Integrating OALCF Task Development within Ontario's Literacy Programs (2014)

OALCF Task Cover Sheet

Task Title: Answer Questions Based on a Short Story

Learner Name:	
Date Started:	Date Completed:
Successful Completion: Yes ___ No ___	
Goal Path: Employment ___ Apprenticeship ___ Secondary School <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Post Secondary ___ Independence ___	
Task Description In this task the learner is required to read a short story and find the necessary information to complete the questions related to the story.	
Competency: A. Find and use information. B. Communicate ideas and information.	Task Group(s): A1: Read continuous text. B2: Write continuous text.
Level Indicators: A1.3: Read texts to connect, evaluate and integrate ideas and information. B2.2: Write texts to explain and describe information and ideas	
Performance Descriptors: see chart on last page	
Materials Required: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The short story "I Can't Write No Pretty Poem"• The task questions• Pen / pencil• Lined paper	



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Learner Information and Tasks:

Write your answers to the tasks below on the lined paper.

Task 1: Where is this story taking place?

Task 2: Who is Mrs. Scott?

Task 3: What problem does Geraldine face as the story begins?

Task 4: In your opinion, why does Geraldine feel that she can't write a poem?

Task 5: How does Mrs. Scott respond to Geraldine's poem?

Task 6: Why do you think Mrs. Scott responds this way?



I Can't Write No Pretty Poem

Adapted from "Geraldine Moore the Poet" by Toni Cade Bambara

As she headed down the hall to her next class, Geraldine remembered that she hadn't done the homework for English. Mrs. Scott had said to write a poem, and Geraldine had meant to do it at lunchtime. After all, there was nothing to it - a flower here, a raindrop there, moon, June, rose, nose. But the men carrying off the furniture had made her forget.

"And now put away your books," Mrs. Scott was saying as Geraldine tried to scribble a poem quickly. "Today we can give King Arthur's Knights a rest. Let's talk about poetry."

Mrs. Scott moved up and down the aisles, talking about her favourite poems and reciting a line now and then. She got very excited whenever she passed a desk and could pick up the homework from a student who had remembered to do the assignment.

"A poem is your own special way of saying what you feel and what you see," Mrs. Scott went on, her lips moist. It was her favourite subject.

"Some poets write about the light that...that... makes the world sunny," she said, passing Geraldine's desk. "Sometimes an idea takes the form of a picture - an image."

For almost half an hour Mrs. Scott stood at the front of the room, reading poems and talking about the lives of great poets. Geraldine drew more houses and designs for curtains.

"So for those of you who haven't done your homework, try it now," Mrs. Scott said. "Try expressing what it is like to be...to be alive in this...this glorious world."

"Oh brother," Geraldine muttered to herself as Mrs. Scott moved up and down the aisles again, waving her hands and leaning over the students' shoulders and saying, "That's nice," or "Keep trying." Finally she came to Geraldine's desk and stopped, looking down at her.

"I can't write a poem," Geraldine, said flatly, before she even realized she was going to speak at all. She said it very loudly and the whole class looked up.

"And why not?" Mrs. Scott asked, looking hurt.

"I can't write a poem Mrs. Scott, because nothing lovely's been happening in my life. I haven't seen a flower since Mother's Day, and the sun don't even shine on my side of the street. No robins come sing on my window sill."

Geraldine swallowed hard. She thought about saying that her father doesn't even come to visit any more, but she changed her mind. "Just the rain comes," she went on, "and the bills come, and the men to move out our furniture. I'm sorry, but I can't write no pretty poem."



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Teddy Johnson leaned over and was about to giggle and crack the whole class up, but Mrs. Scott looked so serious that he changed his mind.

"You have just said the most...the most poetic thing, Geraldine Moore," said Mrs. Scott. Her hands flew up to touch the silk scarf around her neck. "Nothing lovely's been happening in my life." She repeated it so quietly that everyone had to lean forward to hear.

"Class," Mrs. Scott said very sadly, clearing her throat, "you have just heard the best poem you will ever hear." She went to the board and stood there for a long time staring at the chalk in her hand.

"I'd like you to copy it down," she said. She wrote it just as Geraldine had said it, bad grammar and all.

Nothing lovely's been happening in my life.
I haven't seen a flower since Mother's Day,
And the sun don't even shine on my side of the street.
No robins come sing on my window sill
Just the rain comes, and the bills come,
And the men to move out our furniture,
I'm sorry, but I can't write no pretty poem.

Mrs. Scott stopped writing, but she kept her back to the class for a long time - long after Geraldine had closed her notebook.

And even when the bell rang and everyone came over to smile at Geraldine or to tap her on the shoulder or to kid her about being the school poet, Geraldine waited for Mrs. Scott to put the chalk down and turn around. Finally Geraldine stacked up her books and started to leave. Then she thought she heard a whimper - the way Mrs. Watson's dog whimpered sometimes - and she saw Mrs. Scott's shoulders shake a little.



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Answer Key

Task 1: The story takes place in the English class.

Task 2: Mrs. Scott is the English teacher.

Task 3: Geraldine has not finished her English assignment for Mrs. Scott.

Task 4: (Answers will vary)

The learner should include the fact that Geraldine has not been having a good day because of what has been happening in her home life.

Task 5: (Answers will vary)

The learner should mention that Mrs. Scott is pleasantly surprised by Geraldine's poem and thinks it is a very good piece of poetry. Also the learner should mention that Mrs. Scott feels sad about the struggles that Geraldine faces at home. The poem has made Mrs. Scott understand Geraldine's life better.

Task 6: (Answers will vary)

The learner should include the idea that Mrs. Scott didn't realize that Geraldine's life was so full of problems. The poem makes her think about her student in a way she hasn't before.



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Performance Descriptors		Needs Work	Completes task with support from practitioner	Completes task independently
A1.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> integrates several pieces of information from texts 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identifies the purpose and relevance of texts 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> skims to get the gist of longer texts 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> begins to recognize bias and points of view in texts 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> infers meaning which is not explicit in texts 			
B2.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> writes texts to explain and describe 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> conveys intended meaning on familiar topics for a limited range of purposes and audiences 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> begins to sequence writing with some attention to organizing principles (e.g. time, importance) 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> connects ideas using paragraph structure 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses limited range of vocabulary and punctuation appropriate to the task 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> begins to select words and tone appropriate to the task 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> begins to organize writing to communicate effectively 			

This task: was successfully completed ____ needs to be tried again ____

Learner Comments

Instructor (print)

Learner Signature