Poetry Analysis Worksheet: "I like to see it lap the miles" by Emily Dickinson

Name:___________________ Date:_____________

Read the poem and answer the questions below.

I like to see it lap the miles
by Emily Dickinson

I like to see it lap the miles,
And lick the valleys up,
And stop to feed itself at tanks; And then, prodigious, step

Around a pile of mountains,
And, supercilious, peer
In shanties by the sides of roads;
And then a quarry pare

To fit its sides, and crawl between,
Complaining all the while
In horrid, hooting stanza;
Then chase itself down hill

And neigh like Boanerges;
Then, punctual as a star,
Stop--docile and omnipotent--
At its own stable door.

1. Match the word to the correct definition. Feel free to use a dictionary!

   a. lap                                      i. open pit from which stone is
                                                  extracted
   b. tanks                                    m. a section of a poem
   c. prodigious                               n. to peel or cut off
   d. supercilious                             o. shack
   e. shanties                                 p. loud preacher; "sons of
                                                  Thunder"- name Christ gave
                                                  to two of his disciples
   f. quarry                                   q. all-powerful
   g. pare                                     r. large metal container
   h. stanza                                   s. great in size or force
   i. Boanerges                                t. proud and arrogant
   j. omnipotent                               u. lick up
   k. peer                                     v. look intently

2. Write a sentence using each word in #1. Be sure to use the meaning you matched with each word.
   Example: The cat lapped all the milk in the bowl.

3. This poem is written like a riddle in that the speaker never says what "it" is. What do you think "it" is that the poem is describing?

4.

I like to see it lap the miles,
And lick the valleys up,

These two lines describe how "it" travels across the landscape. Do you think it is moving fast or slow?

5. In the first 3 lines of the poem, Dickinson uses the imagery of eating. Find three words that show "it" eating:

6. What does "it" do after it feeds itself at tanks?

7. And then after that?

8. And then a quarry pare

   To fit its sides, and crawl between,

These two lines are a bit difficult. "It" will cut out rocks (remember what "quarry" and "pare" mean from your matching exercise!) so that it can crawl into the space that it has made and possibly go through this space. Bonus question! What do you think the speaker is describing in these two lines? What is "it" going through?
9. **Complaining all the while**  
**In horrid, hooting stanza:**

a. Find the **alliteration** in the lines above. Remember, alliteration is the same **beginning** consonant sound in words that are close together.

b. **Onomatopoeia** is the use of words that sound like their meanings. For example, buzz, clack, clang, splash. Find the onomatopoeic word in the above lines.

10. **Bonus Question! Allusion** is the reference to something or someone from literature, history, mythology, etc. Find an example of allusion in this poem.

11. By now you should have guessed that the speaker in the poem is describing a train. "It" is a train. However, the speaker is describing the train as if it were an animal.

a. Find two words in the last stanza that make it seem like an animal.

b. What kind of animal is the train being compared to?

c. What is this kind of figure of speech called?

   a. oxymoron  
   b. simile  
   c. metaphor  
   d. hyperbole  
   e. none of the above

12. **Then, punctual as a star,**  
**Stop--docile and omnipotent--**  
**At its own stable door.**

a. Oxymoron is a combination of opposite or contradictory words or terms. Find the oxymoron in the lines above:

13. True or false? The speaker finds the noise that the train makes unpleasant. Write below the part of the poem that supports your answer:

14. I like to see it lap the miles,  
And lick the valleys up,  
And stop to feed itself at tanks;  
And then, prodigious, step

The second and third lines do not quite rhyme, but the final consonant sounds of the words at the end are the same, the **p-sound** in **up** and **step**. This kind of matching final consonant sound is called a **slant rhyme** or **half rhyme**. Another example of a slant rhyme is peer and pare of the second stanza, which both end with an **r-sound**. Find two more pairs of slant rhyme.

15. Five different adjectives are directly applied to the train to describe it; **prodigious** is the first one. Find four more:

Good work! Now read the poem again and see if you understand it better for having analyzed it through these questions.
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Answer Sheet

1.
   a. u
   b. r
   c. s
   d. t
   e. o
   f. l
   g. n
   h. m
   i. p
   j. q
   k. v

2. Sentences will vary; students should use the meanings given in the matching exercise.

3. train

4. fast

5. lap, lick, feed

6. It steps around a pile of mountains.

7. It peers in shanties by the sides of roads.

8. tunnel

9.
   a. horrid, hooting
   b. hooting

10. "And neigh like Boanerges"

11.
   a. neigh, stable
   b. horse
   c. c

12.
   a. "docile and omnipotent"
   b. stars come out each night at the same time (or they seem to)

13. True, "In horrid, hooting, stanza" ("horrid" shows the speaker's negative feelings toward the noise)

14. while/hill, star/door

15. supercilious, punctual, docile, omnipotent

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