

5E Passage

Read the passage below; then complete the exercise that follows.

A Born Artist

To exhibit one's work at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., would be a high point in any artist's career; to receive such an honor at the age of fourteen is truly remarkable. Yet that was the age of the Chinese painter Wang Yani when her paintings were given their first American showing there in 1989. Hundreds of thousands of visitors came and were **captivated** by her pictures of animals, birds, and landscapes. And in the Smithsonian's Sackler Gallery, audiences were able to watch as Yani, barefoot and **attired** casually in shirt and denim shorts, walked on stage, and with **deft** strokes of the brush produced works of art right before their eyes. She did so with total concentration, seemingly unaware of the onlookers.

If fourteen seems a young age to receive so much attention, consider this: Yani's first exhibition, in her native China, was held when she was four! She has been working **diligently** at her art since the age of two; that was when Wang Shi Chiang first became aware of his daughter's interest in painting. Himself a well-known artist, he encouraged Yani by providing her with large sheets of paper, ink, and brushes, the traditional materials of Chinese painting. He never gave her a lesson and also discouraged her teachers at school from doing so. He believed such instruction would only **stifle** her imagination and prevent her from expressing her feelings freely. His faith in his daughter's **innate** talent was fully justified by her early success. In fact, Wang Yani's fame soon **eclipsed** her father's fame.

Yani's first subjects were monkeys. She became fascinated with their **antics** after a visit to the local zoo and painted hundreds of pictures of them. One of her favorites is thirty feet long and took her just four hours to complete. It shows 112 monkeys in various **postures**, each with a different expression.

As she grew older, she became more **versatile** and began painting other creatures such as birds, horses, and lions. Later, her style **evolved**, and she broadened her range of subjects to include trees, flowers, and, especially, landscapes. Her interest in landscapes is not surprising since Yani lives in a region of great natural beauty in southern China, with gently rolling hills, clear streams, and ancient temples. Not far away are the famous cone-shaped Guilin mountains, often **shrouded** in mist, and a favorite subject of the young painter. Yani paints what she feels about what she sees rather than simply what she sees, and in her paintings of the mountains she tries to capture the feeling of **tranquility** that she experienced while visiting the scene.

She often begins by spilling ink onto the paper, a method known as po-mo. She follows this with a few **tentative** strokes, then proceeds rapidly until the painting is completed, often in less than half an hour. Yani often includes an **inscription** in Chinese characters as part of a painting. A typical one reads, "Autumn is a withering season for the trees, but the animals are happy."

By the time she was sixteen, Yani had painted more than ten thousand pictures. You might wonder if she has time for other things. In addition to pursuing her studies, she reads for pleasure, especially Chinese literature. She also enjoys playing basketball and table tennis. Her other talents are singing and dancing, skills that she feels help her with her painting, for in a good painting, according to a Chinese saying, "the brush sings and the ink dances."

Answer each of the following questions in the form of a sentence. If a question does not contain a vocabulary word from this lesson's word list, use one in your answer. Use each word only once. Questions and answers will then contain all fifteen words (or forms of the words).

1. Why do you think Yani was able to produce more than ten thousand paintings by the time she was sixteen?

2. Why do you think Yani's first brush strokes are sometimes made in a **tentative** manner?

3. What feeling does Yani capture in her paintings of the Guilin mountains?

4. What subject **captivated** Yani when she was very young?

5. What ability is required in order to enjoy the **inscription** on a painting by Yani?

6. What is the meaning of **stifle** as it is used in the passage?

7. How can you explain Yani's ability to paint when she was so young and had never received any lessons?

8. What is the meaning of **posture** as it is used in the passage?

9. Has Yani always worn traditional Chinese **attire** when appearing in public?

10. How does Yani demonstrate her **versatility** in painting?

11. What is the meaning of **eclipse** as it is used in the passage?

12. Why would you expect a painting done by Yani when she was six years old to be different from one done when she was sixteen?

13. How does Yani's style of working enable her to finish a painting in such a short time?

14. What kind of monkeys' **antics** do you think Yani found amusing?

15. What is the meaning of **shroud** as it is used in the passage?

FUN & FASCINATING FACTS

The Latin word *natus* means "born" and forms the root of several English words. **Innate** qualities are those that seem to have been with a person since birth. *Prenatal* care is that given to a mother before the birth of her child. To be a *native* of a particular place means that one was born in that place.

Old English was the language spoken in England between 500 and 1200. A number of its words have

survived, often with changed spellings and slightly altered meanings to become part of modern English. **Shroud** is such a word; it comes from *scrud*, an Old English word for a loose article of clothing that covered most of the body. The dead would usually be buried wearing the scrud they had worn in life, and in time the word, changed to *shroud*, came to mean "a covering for a dead body." As a verb it came to mean "to hide from sight" or "to cover."