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## Ayoka's Test by Elaine Marie Alphin

The door opened slowly. One of the great chiefs stepped out of the Cherokee National Council, his eyes darting around the crowd. Then his gaze fell on Ayoka. The frown on his face deepened, and he raised one hand and beckoned sharply to the young girl.

Taking a deep breath, Ayoka followed the chief into the council room. She stopped just inside the door, feeling hot and sick. The air inside was warm and smelled of wood smoke. Her father was there, leaning against a wooden pole. There were many great chiefs seated in a large circle, some wearing suits like the white men, some wearing Cherokee robes or cloaks. Most of them stared at her disapprovingly.

It was 1820, and Ayoka knew that children were supposed to keep silent. How could she speak before the National Council? But her father was counting on her. If she failed today, twelve years of his work would be wasted.

“Don’t be frightened, Ayoka,” her father said gently. “Come read this aloud.”

Eyes fixed on her father, Ayoka hurried across the room and took the **parchment** from his hand.

Ayoka’s father was Sequoya, a Cherokee silversmith. But the piece of parchment and the chiefs’ disapproval were not about silver. They were about Sequoya’s plan to teach the Cherokee people to write their own language.

When Sequoya fought in the Battle of Horseshoe Bend he saw how white soldiers could read letters from their families and write words to them on paper. Many Cherokee children had learned the white people’s writing in order to read books and newspapers in English, but Sequoya wanted his people to be able to write in their own language, Cherokee. “Why read ideas in English?” he demanded. “We must write down our own legends and ideas in Cherokee so that they will be remembered.” But until now there was no way to write the Cherokee language.

As far back as Ayoka could remember, her father had been muttering to himself and making strange marks, sometimes scratching in the ashes on the hearth, sometimes rubbing charcoal on pieces of bark. The result was his **syllabary**, a written language of eighty-five symbols based on the syllable sounds of spoken Cherokee. Every symbol always sounded the same, so the syllabary was easy to learn.

Sequoya had already taught the syllabary to his own children and many of his neighbors and friends. But some Cherokees laughed at the idea. “We tell our legends over the fire at night,” they said in their native tongue. “How can those marks tell our tales? Better to remember them in our heads! Leave the writing to the other people.”

That didn’t make sense to Ayoka. The Cherokee people were changing; she could see it in the strange clothes and accents of the men in the council room. How many of the great chiefs who wore cloth suits and spoke English to each other could remember all the old Cherokee legends? And if they forgot, how would their children and their children’s children learn the tales, unless they were written down? Ayoka didn’t want her people to lose their history. If the great chiefs accepted Sequoya’s plan, the syllabary would be taught to everyone in the Cherokee Nation.



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But judging from their angry looks, they thought Sequoya was wasting their time; his writing was only a hoax. This test of the Cherokee National Council was Ayoka's chance to show them how easily the syllabary could be read. She glanced at the parchment in her hand and cleared her throat. The symbols her father had written were neat. The smallest child in their village could have read this easily.

"The people of the Cherokee Nation," she read in a clear, confident voice, "must hold on to their identity. Their path lies beside the path of the people of the United States. Only as friends and equals can both nations meet the future."

Ayoka looked up and smiled in relief at her father. Not all the great chiefs were convinced.

"She didn't read it," said one with a colorfully painted face. "She looked at her father when she came in and then she stood beside him. He must have signaled the words to her."

Ayoka opened her mouth to protest, but was silenced by Sequoya's hand on her shoulder.

"Perhaps you would permit a different test?" he suggested. "I could go to another building with several of you and write something that you say. Then you could bring the parchment back to my daughter while I remain outside."

The chiefs agreed, and several of them led her father away. Ayoka stared at her moccasins and counted the endless seconds until the chiefs finally returned. They handed her the roll of parchment.

Even more nervous without her father, Ayoka took the new piece of parchment in her trembling hand and unrolled it. This time Sequoya had hurried, and the symbols were not as neat and clear as before. But she must not fail. Ayoka forced herself to concentrate on each symbol. She silently read what her father had written down, preparing herself for speaking it aloud.

**G W Y : h S L D h B @ h F J L A @ D @ O h T A O E S t  
S G O @ F R T. F h A W O @ L O U A D @ O Z C @ J  
D @ H @ F R A h A @ @ L A J D @ C O P D L O V E J.**

Ayoka stood tall, drew a breath, and spoke clearly what was written on the parchment:

*"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."*

Ayoka looked up to see the great chiefs nodding and smiling.

"Those are exactly the words I **dictated**," one chief said, shaking his head in surprise. "I never thought the girl could read the marks!"

One of the great chiefs who wore a white man's suit of clothes patted Ayoka's shoulder. "You did well, child. You have proven to us that these marks carry our words. Run now, and summon your father." Around her, eager voices asked how soon they could send teachers to every village and town, how quickly they could produce a written version of the Cherokee constitution and a weekly newspaper—everything her father had dreamed of! Several of the chiefs spoke about learning to speak the written letters so they could show their tribes.

Ayoka had gotten her wish, too: even though she was only a small girl, she had helped her father preserve the tales she loved for the generations of Cherokee children yet to come. Ayoka left the council room with dignity and ran eagerly to tell Sequoya they had succeeded.

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**Name >****1**

What probably happened after the Cherokee nation adopted Sequoyia's syllabary?

- (A) Cherokee writing began to resemble the English alphabet.
- (B) Cherokee legends and ideas would only be found in English history books.
- (C) The Cherokee people lost their history because they had no way to record it.
- (D) The Cherokee people recorded their legends and stories in their own language.

**2**

How did Sequoyia persuade the Cherokee chiefs to adopt a written language?

- (F) He and Ayoka convinced the chiefs that it really worked.
- (G) He sympathized with their feelings against adopting white people's ideas.
- (H) He ridiculed their feelings of resistance toward a written Cherokee syllabary.
- (I) He criticized the white people's alphabet as an ineffective tool for communication.

**3**

The dialogue from the Cherokees Chiefs shows they were

- (A) eager to adopt new ideas.
- (B) careful about accepting change.
- (C) willing to write their own constitution.
- (D) angry at the people of the United States.

**4**

The imagery in paragraph 2 helps readers

- (F) compare Sequoyia with Ayoka.
- (G) place themselves in the setting.
- (H) know that there were two parchments.
- (I) understand that Ayoka's father was a silversmith.

**5**

Which of the following shows that some Cherokees had already adopted the white man's ways?

- (A) silver and leather
- (B) fathers and daughters
- (C) language and clothing
- (D) parchment and charcoal

***Go on to next page***

**Name >****6**

Why is the year 1820 important in establishing the setting in the story?

- (F ) It was when children were silent.
- (G) Native American life was changing.
- (H) Folk tales were finally written down.
- (I ) Sequoia invented the syllabary that year.

**7**

*Ayoka's Test* is written from the point of view of a third-person narrator. Because of this point of view, what does a reader know?

- (A) the fears of the narrator
- (B) the actions of the main character only
- (C) the thoughts of the main character only
- (D) the fears and thoughts of each character

**8**

Which dictionary entry for the Latin-based word dictate is intended in the following sentence?

“Those are exactly the words I **dictated**.”

- (F ) to command expressively
- (G) to give orders with authority
- (H) to give orders with arbitrarily
- (I ) to speak aloud for another to write

**9**

What does the word syllabary mean in this passage?

- (A) a group of syllables found in a book
- (B) a group of syllables spoken by Cherokees
- (C) a spoken language based on syllable sounds
- (D) a written language based on syllable sounds

**10**

What is parchment?

- (F ) a type of paper
- (G) a type of pencil
- (H) a piece of wood
- (I ) a written language

**Stop here**

**Name >****Directions for item 1****Teacher Information for Ayoka's Test**

Grade 5 and 8 Social Studies Connections

Grade 5 students studied the two social studies indicators below which are **directly related** to this story. Grade 8 Social Studies 8-1.1 also deals with Native American cultures ( literacy, family, etc ) and political systems ( the Great Cherokee Council, Chiefs ).

**5-2.4** Provide examples of **conflict and cooperation between .. ethnic groups in the West**, including **Native Americans** ... (E, H)

**5-2.5** Explain the **social** and economic **effects of the westward expansion on Native Americans**, including .... **Native American displacement**. (P, G, E, H)

**8-1.1** Summarize the **culture, political systems, and daily life of the Native Americans of the Eastern Woodlands**, including their methods of hunting and farming, their use of natural resources and geographic features, and **their relationships with other nations**. (H, G, P)

**Synopsis:** Elder Chiefs of the Cherokee nation did not believe that written symbols could 'speak'. The story tells about a confrontation between Sequoya, Ayoka and the Great Cherokee Council where it was proven to all, with the help of a child, that "Sequoya's Talking Leaves" could indeed speak.

This historical narrative is lexiled at 820L. Students whose lexile ranges are lower than 720-870 may have difficulty reading this text.

The following reading skills are assessed within this assessment:

| <u>Item # and Code</u> | <u>Goal and Strand Information</u>                 | <u>RIT Level</u> |
|------------------------|--|------------------|
| 1 8-1.1.061            | Compare/contrast ideas ... to make inferences.     | R 211-220        |
| 2 8-1.1.062            | Compare/contrast ideas ... to make inferences.     | R 211-220        |
| 3 8-1.1.063            | Compare/contrast ideas ... to make inferences.     | R 211-220        |
| 4 8-1.5.051            | Analyze the effect of the author's craft: imagery. | R 191-200        |
| 5 8-1.1.065            | Compare/contrast ideas ... to make inferences.     | R 211-220        |
| 6 8-1.1.066            | Compare/contrast ideas ... to make inferences.     | R 211-220        |
| 7 8-1.2.061            | Explain the effect of point of view ....           | R 191-200        |
| 8 8-3.2.061            | Analyze the meaning of words ... Latin roots...    | R 211-220        |
| 9 8-3.1.061            | Use context clues to generate meanings...          | R 231-240        |
| 10 8-3.1.062           | Use context clues to generate meanings...          | R 201-210        |

**820L Ayoka's Test**

■ = test item number ○ = GP Form line number

Name >

| ? | ⊙ | Answer/<br>Scale | Objective                                      | ?  | ⊙  | Answer/<br>Scale | Objective  |
|---|---|------------------|--|----|----|------------------|--|
| 1 | 1 | D                | 8-1.1 Compare contrast within and across li... | 6  | 6  | G                | 8-1.1 Compare contrast within and across li...     |
| 2 | 2 | F                | 8-1.1 Compare contrast within and across li... | 7  | 7  | D                | 8-1.2 Explain effects of point of view on liter... |
| 3 | 3 | B                | 8-1.1 Compare contrast within and across li... | 8  | 8  | I                | 8-3.2 Analyze the meanings using Greek an...       |
| 4 | 4 | G                | 8-1.5 Analyze effects of the author's craft on | 9  | 9  | D                | 8-3.1 Use context clues unfamiland multiple...     |
| 5 | 5 | C                | 8-1.1 Compare contrast within and across li... | 10 | 10 | F                | 8-3.1 Use context clues unfamiland multiple...     |

Total questions on test: 10

Minimum points  
required to achieve  
mastery category

| Objectives measured: 5                             | Items | Points | ● | ☾ | Questions measuring this objective |
|--|-------|--------|---|---|------------------------------------|
| 8-1.1 Compare contrast within and across literary  | 5     | 5      | 4 | - | 1 2 3 5 6                          |
| 8-1.5 Analyze effects of the author's craft on     | 1     | 1      | 1 | - | 4                                  |
| 8-1.2 Explain effects of point of view on literary | 1     | 1      | 1 | - | 7                                  |
| 8-3.2 Analyze the meanings using Greek and L...    | 1     | 1      | 1 | - | 8                                  |
| 8-3.1 Use context clues unfamiland multiple-mea    | 2     | 2      | 2 | - | 9 10                               |
| <b>Totals</b>                                      |       | 10     | 9 | 9 |                                    |

Name >

Items used in test

| ? | Item name | ? | Item name | ?  | Item name |
|---|-----------|---|-----------|----|-----------|
| 1 | 8-1.1.061 | 5 | 8-1.1.065 | 8  | 8-3.2.061 |
| 2 | 8-1.1.062 | 6 | 8-1.1.066 | 9  | 8-3.1.061 |
| 3 | 8-1.1.063 | 7 | 8-1.2.061 | 10 | 8-3.1.062 |
| 4 | 8-1.5.051 |   |           |    |           |