

Name: _____ Class: _____

Aurelia Dobre: World Champion Gymnast

By Chris Woods
1993

Aurelia is a former gymnast from Romania and the 1987 world all-around champion. In this poem, a speaker describes Dobre participating in several gymnastics events. As you read, take notes on how the author uses figurative language to describe Dobre's gymnastics routine.

- [1] Spins clockwork,
then oscillates¹
between the bars.
Time waits
- [5] as she unwinds.
Walks the plank.
Defies the natural order.
Points toes
to test the water.
- [10] Walks on that.
Skims and ducks
and drakes²
across the mat.
Creates
- [15] ripples of applause.
Computes³ her vault⁴
on magnetic
tape.
The kick
- [20] is muscle memory.
Traces her geometry;
spirals, circles.
No straight edge,
all curves, curls,
- [25] and smiles.



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1. to move or swing back and forth at a regular speed
2. a male duck
3. to make a calculation
4. a gymnastics event, in which the gymnast jumps over an obstacle while performing tricks

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which of the following identifies the theme of the poem?
 - A. People can do amazing things with hard work and practice.
 - B. The human body is limitless, if you take good care of it.
 - C. A person must love what they do in order to succeed at it.
 - D. Nothing is ever as easy as it appears.

2. PART B: Which detail from the poem best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "Time waits / as she unwinds. / Walks the plank." (Lines 4-6)
 - B. "Walks on that. / Skims and ducks / and drakes" (Lines 10-12)
 - C. "The kick / is muscle memory. / Traces her geometry;" (Lines 19-21)
 - D. "No straight edge, / all curves, curls, / and smiles." (Lines 23-25)

3. PART A: How does the author's word choice contribute to the poem?
 - A. It emphasizes how easy gymnastics is for Dobre.
 - B. It depicts Dobre's impressive gymnastics abilities.
 - C. It stresses how unsure Dobre is of her abilities.
 - D. It highlights the excitement of the audience as they watch Dobre.

4. PART B: Which quote from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "Walks the plank. / Defies the natural order." (Lines 6-7)
 - B. "Points toes / to test the water." (Lines 8-9)
 - C. "Computes her vault / on magnetic / tape." (Lines 16-18)
 - D. "No straight edge, / all curves, curls," (Lines 23-25)

5. How does the figurative language used in lines 7-12 contribute to the poem?

Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. Why is the speaker impressed by the gymnast? What about her routine is special?
2. In the context of the poem, why do people succeed? How do you think Aurelia Dobre became a world champion gymnast? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.