

**Writing Response 1**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Think again about 5-year-old Melba’s experience at the Fair Park carousel (p. 4) and the ideas expressed in Langston Hughes’ poem.

**Merry-Go-Round**  
by Langston Hughes

Colored child at carnival:

Where is the Jim Crow section  
On this merry-go-round,  
Mister, cause I want to ride?  
Down South where I come from  
White and colored  
Can’t sit side by side.  
Down South on the train  
There’s a Jim Crow car.  
On the bus we’re put in the back—  
But there ain’t no back  
To a merry-go-round!  
Where’s the horse  
For a kid that’s black?

Write **two paragraphs** in response to **one** of the prompts below. In the first paragraph, explain Melba’s or the child’s experience. In the second paragraph, describe your own experience and your reaction.

**1)** Melba was frightened and disappointed that she did not get to do something she had looked forward to. The child in the poem is trying to understand a puzzling situation. In your first paragraph, explain Melba’s or the child’s experience. Then tell about a time when you felt frightened, disappointed, or puzzled. Describe what happened and your reaction.

**OR**

**2)** Melba and the child in the poem both lose a little of their innocence as they learn something new about how the world really is. Explain Melba’s or the child’s loss of innocence. Then tell about a time when you learned a similar lesson.

SCORING—6 Traits Rubric

IDEAS	5	4	3	2	1
ORGANIZATION	5	4	3	2	1

Plus 5 points per paragraph for task completion

**Total Score**

**/20**

**Writing Response 2** (Simulated Diary) Reread the scene in which Grandma India chides Melba for crying because she is disappointed that her new notoriety makes it unsafe for her to go out with friends (pp. 44-45)

*Then I heard Grandma India padding across the room and felt the weight of her body shift the plane of the mattress as she sat down.*

*“You had a good cry, girl?” Her voice was sympathetic but also one sliver away from being angry.*

*“Yes, ma’am.”*

*“You’ll make this your last cry. You’re a warrior on the battlefield for your Lord. God’s warriors don’t cry, ‘cause they trust that he’s always by their side. The women of this family don’t break down in the face of trouble. We act with courage, and with God’s help, we ship trouble right on out.”*

*“But I—” I tried to explain.*

*“But nothing. Now, you get yourself together, read the Twenty-Third Psalm, and don’t ever let me see you behave this way again.”*

*“Yes, ma’am.” The anger in her voice hurt my feelings, but her warm hand patted my arm to reassure me of her love. From then on, I knew I could only cry when no one would hear me.*

**Imagine that you are Grandma India. Explain why you spoke to Melba as you did.** An excellent response will consist of at least two paragraphs and will show that you understand Grandma India’s values (look at Psalm 23) as well as her reference to the women of the family—consider what we have learned about the family’s past. Remember to take on Grandma India’s role as you write.

SCORING—6 Traits Rubric

IDEAS	5	4	3	2	1
ORGANIZATION	5	4	3	2	1
VOICE	5	4	3	2	1

Plus 5 points per paragraph for task completion

**Total Score**

**/25**

**Writing Response 3**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Reread the excerpt from Melba’s diary (p. 58).

*Today is the first time in my life I felt equal to white people. I want more of that feeling. I’ll do whatever I have to do to keep feeling equal all the time. I apologize, God, for thinking you had taken away all my normal life. Maybe you’re just exchanging it for a new life.*

The idea expressed in the last two sentences is similar to these common sayings:

“God never closes a door without opening a window.”

“Every cloud has a silver lining.”

“No trouble comes without bringing some good.”

In two paragraphs:

- 1) **explain** what Melba means (think about the events that influenced her to write these words)
- 2) **tell** about a time when one of these sayings could have been applied to your own experience

SCORING—6 Traits Rubric

IDEAS	5	4	3	2	1
ORGANIZATION	5	4	3	2	1
VOICE	5	4	3	2	1

Plus 5 points per paragraph for task completion

**Total Score**

**/25**

**Written Response 4—Tell a story**

Name:

Read the following passages about Melba’s experiences. Then write a two paragraph response to the writing prompt.

1. *A new voice in my head spoke to me with military-like discipline: Discover ink sprayed on the contents of your locker—don’t fret about it, deal with it...Kicked in the shin, tripped on the marble floor—assess the damage and do whatever is necessary to remain mobile. Move out! Warriors keep moving. They don’t stop to lick their wounds or cry (p. 128).*

2. *My feelings were doubly hurt. No one bothered to tell me to move my party to another date, and worse yet, they were having the biggest Christmas party of the season without inviting me.*

*Even though I felt so embarrassed I could die, I kept smiling, trying to pretend to Vince that I wasn’t brokenhearted about the empty room we sat in with all those balloons on the ceiling and all that food getting cold on the dining room table (p. 145).*

Think of a time when you (or someone you know) had to set aside your feelings and continue in a difficult situation. Tell the story. In your response, reflect on the long-term effect—how do you (or the person whose story you are telling) view the incident now?

**SCORING—6 Traits Rubric**

IDEAS	10	9	8	7	6
ORGANIZATION	10	9	8	7	6
WORD CHOICE	10	9	8	7	6

**Total Score**

**/30**

**Writing Response 5—friendly letter**  
(After Chapter 16)

**Name:**

Imagine you know Melba personally and want to help her. Write her a letter (two or more paragraphs) with advice that will help her decide how to deal with Link. Consider her fear that his help is really a trap, her need for protection, the risk of physical danger they both face, and the opinions of Melba’s family.

As Melba’s friend, you will use appropriately casual language for a friendly letter. If you include slang, make it 1950s slang (research on the internet or call your grandma; some of the teachers might be able to help).

**SCORING—6 Traits Rubric**

IDEAS	10	9	8	7	6
ORGANIZATION	10	9	8	7	6
VOICE (suitable tone)	10	9	8	7	6

**Total points**

**/30**