

Read this selection. Then choose the best answer to each question.

"A Pioneer Woman Looks Back" is a poem from Bobbi Katz's collection *We the People*. In this poem Katz writes in the voice of Mary Stahler, a pioneer who moves to the frontier with her husband to take possession of a land grant.

A Pioneer Woman Looks Back

MARY STAHLER—KANSAS, 1874

by Bobbi Katz

"Free for the taking. At that price, YOU can buy . . . a garden in the West . . . endless land and endless sky!"

5 We were just newlyweds.
John said, "It seems best
to grow with the country—
raise our family out West."
We were young. We were strong.
How were we to know
10 land and sky could be cruel?
We got ready to go.
I smiled through my tears,
as our loved ones waved good-bye.
We crossed
15 the Mississippi
for
endless land . . . endless sky . . .

20 The trail was rough
and the going was tough.
The prairies of Kansas
were far West enough.
John staked out our claim
one hot day in July,
as I waited and I watched—
endless land . . . endless sky . . .

25 Young John was born
early that fall.
Next came Mary,
then Elizabeth . . .
nine kids in all.

30 I schooled the children.
Town was too far away.
There were so many chores
to fit into a day!
35 Cooking, sewing, laundry—
and much more to do.
Yet somehow I found time
to be lonely, too:
The endless droning of the wind,
40 a lone coyote's call,
the chatter of the children,
no visitors at all.
I longed to see a woman—
to hear a woman's voice.
Instead, I hear winds whisper:
45 *Free land! You made a choice.*
Often I wonder,
and I can't help but sigh—
What price we really paid
for
50 endless land . . . endless sky . . .

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- 1** The poet helps the reader understand how it felt to be on the frontier mainly by —
- A** creating vivid images of remoteness
 - B** explaining how land was claimed
 - C** stressing the difficulty of raising a large family
 - D** comparing the advantages and disadvantages of moving to the West
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- 2** The poet places the words “no visitors at all” on a line by themselves most likely because the words —
- A** highlight the speaker’s loneliness
 - B** explain why work on the frontier was time-consuming
 - C** describe the speaker’s desire not to be distracted from her family
 - D** suggest that pioneers were not friendly or social
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- 3** The repetition of the line “endless land . . . endless sky . . .” suggests that the speaker —
- A** recognizes the infinite possibilities of living on the frontier
 - B** thinks that frontier life is unfair because of its challenges
 - C** feels overwhelmed by the vastness of the surroundings
 - D** appreciates the incredible beauty of the environment

- 4 To the speaker's husband, moving west mostly represents —
- A uniqueness
 - B opportunity
 - C sacrifice
 - D peacefulness
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- 5 At the end of the poem, the speaker expresses a feeling of —
- A hope, because she plans to sell the property and return to her hometown
 - B uncertainty, because she wonders about opportunities for her children
 - C frustration, because her life has presented her with very few choices
 - D loss, because she is aware of all she gave up in order to own a large plot of land
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- 6 Because the poem is written from the speaker's point of view, the reader is better able to understand —
- A when it was that pioneers began to move west
 - B how pioneers spent their time on the frontier
 - C where on the frontier pioneers built homes
 - D what kinds of sacrifices pioneers made by moving west

- 7 Read lines 44 and 45 from the poem.

Instead, I hear winds whisper:
Free land! You made a choice.

The poet uses personification in these lines to show that the winds —

- A are important to frontier life
 - B seem to taunt the speaker
 - C serve as a symbol of the speaker's anger
 - D blow gently and quietly on the frontier
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- 8 Which line best communicates the speaker's feelings of regret?
- A *I schooled the children.*
 - B *There were so many chores*
 - C *and the going was tough.*
 - D *and I can't help but sigh—*