Today, you will read two stories titled “The Relatives Came” and “Grandmama’s Kitchen Table.” As you read, think about the actions of the characters and the events of the stories. When you answer the questions, use those answers to later help you write an essay.

Read the story titled “The Relatives Came” by Cynthia Rylant. Then answer Questions 1 through 3.
The Relatives Came
by Cynthia Rylant

It was in the summer of the year when the relatives came. They came up from Virginia. They left when their grapes were nearly purple enough to pick, but not quite.

They had an old station wagon that smelled like a real car, and in it they put an ice chest full of soda pop and some boxes of crackers and some bologna sandwiches, and up they came--from Virginia.

They left at four in the morning when it was still dark, before even the birds were awake.

They drove all day long and into the night, and while they traveled along they looked at the strange houses and different mountains and they thought about their almost purple grapes back home. They thought about Virginia--but they thought about us, too. Waiting for them.

So they drank up all their pop and ate up all their crackers and traveled up all those miles until finally they pulled into our yard.

Then it was hugging time. Talk about hugging! Those relatives just passed us all around their car, pulling us against their wrinkled Virginia clothes, crying sometimes. They hugged us for hours.

Then it was into the house and so much laughing and shining faces and hugging in the doorways. You'd have to go through at least four different hugs to get from the kitchen to the front room. Those relatives!

And finally after a big supper two or three times around until we all got a turn at the table, there was quiet talk and we were in twos and threes through the house.
The relatives weren't particular about beds, which was good since there weren't any extras, so a few squeezed in with us and the rest slept on the floor, some with their arms thrown over the closest person, or some with an arm across one person and a leg across another.

It was different, going to sleep with all that new breathing in the house.

The relatives stayed for weeks and weeks. They helped us tend the garden and they fixed any broken things they could find.

They ate up all our strawberries and melons, then promised we could eat up all their grapes and peaches when we came to Virginia.

But none of us thought about Virginia much. We were so busy hugging and eating and breathing together.

Finally, after a long time, the relatives loaded up their ice chest and headed back to Virginia at four in the morning. We stood there in our pajamas and waved them off in the dark.

We watched the relatives disappear down the road, then we crawled back into our beds that felt too big and too quiet. We fell asleep.

And the relatives drove on, all day long and into the night, and while they traveled along they looked at the strange houses and different mountains and they thought about their dark purple grapes waiting at home in Virginia.

But they thought about us, too. Missing them. And they missed us.

And when they were finally home in Virginia, they crawled into their silent, soft beds and dreamed about the next summer.
1. Part A

What does “waved them off in the dark” mean as it is used in Paragraph 13 of “The Relatives Came?”

a. It was different  
b. Saying goodbye  
c. Missing them  
d. Hugging time

Part B

Which statement best supports the answer to Part A?

a. “…loaded up their ice chest and headed back to Virginia…”  
b. “…going to sleep with all that new breathing in the house.”  
c. “…they thought about us, too.”  
d. “They hugged us for hours.”

2. Part A

What do the details of the story show about how the relatives cared for each other?

a. They ate meals together.  
b. They went back to their home.  
c. They cared deeply for each other.  
d. They helped each other.
Part B

Which detail from “The Relatives Came” supports the answer to Part A?

a. “So they drank up all their pop and ate up all their crackers...”
b. “We watched the relatives disappear down the road...”
c. “…they fixed any broken things they could find.”
d. “…so much laughing and shining faces and hugging in the doorways.”

3. Part A

Read these sentences from Paragraph 15 of the story.

But they thought about us, too. Missing them. And they missed us.

These sentences show that the narrator feels sad. Why is she sad?

a. The relatives traveled far.
b. Their fruits were gone.
c. She misses the relatives.
d. The relatives weren’t particular about their beds.

Part B

Which detail from the story best supports the answer to Part A?

a. “They ate up all their strawberries and their melons...”
b. “…a few squeezed in with us and the rest slept on the floor...”
c. “They drove all day long and into the night...”
d. “…then we crawled back into our beds that felt too big and too quiet.”
Read the story titled “Grandmama’s Kitchen Table” by Cynthia Rylant. Then answer questions 4 through 6.
GRANDMAMA'S KITCHEN TABLE
by Cynthia Rylant
illustrated by Vladimir Radunsky

Since I was four years old I have been talking about my life to the people who sit at my grandmama’s kitchen table in Cool Ridge, West Virginia.

The kitchen is small and skinny. There is a little window next to Grandmama’s table, and this is where she sits when she is alone in the house. Out it she can see the birds at the apple tree, eating the seed she left them, and she can see who’s driving up the hollow, or whose child is walking out the dirt road to the school bus. There are woods all around, and her eyes will follow them down past the creek, down past Bill Mills’ house, and on.

When I am visiting, I make sure I never sit in Grandmama’s chair. I want her to have her little window.

Relatives will come by—Uncle Dean and Aunt Linda, Sue and the girls, Bev and the baby—and all sit around Grandmama’s sturdy old table, even though someone will have to sit on a bench in the doorway or on an extra chair that will block anybody who’s trying to get through the room. But no one wants to go into the living room, where there’s plenty seats for us all. We want to be in Grandmama’s kitchen, near this heavy old table, and we want to drink coffee and tea and Coke and eat angel food cake or leftover biscuits and talk and talk and talk and talk until we are all talked out, and there is nothing left to do but go on home and rest up and come back tomorrow to talk some more.
4. Part A

What does **talked out** mean as it is used in Paragraph 4 of “Grandmama’s Kitchen Table?”

a. Talked in the woods  
b. Talked in the kitchen  
c. Nothing left to talk about  
d. Visited with the relatives

Part B

Which statement **best** supports the answer to Part A?

a. “Relatives will come by—...”  
b. “There are woods all around...”  
c. “We want to be in Grandmama’s kitchen...”  
d. “…we talked, and talked, and talked....”

5. Part A

Which statement **best** describes how this family feels about Grandmama’s kitchen table?

a. They would rather spend time at the kitchen table than anywhere else.  
b. Relatives like to visit grandmama.  
c. The table is in a good spot.  
d. The family does a lot at the table.
Part B

Which statement best supports the answer to Part A?

a. “There is a little window next to Grandmama’s table...”
b. “But no one wants to go into the living room, where there’s plenty seats for us all.”
c. “...drink coffee and tea and Coke and eat angel food cake...”
d. “Relatives will come by-Uncle Dean, and Aunt Linda...”

6. Part A

The narrator and her relatives enjoy spending time with their grandmama. How do they show this?

a. They take her for walks in the woods.
b. They crowd into the kitchen.
c. They like the kitchen best.
d. They visit her often and spend time with her.

Part B

Which statement best supports the answer to Part A?

a. “There are woods all around...”
b. “…and there is nothing left to do but go on home and rest up and come back tomorrow to talk some more.”
c. “But no one wants to go into the living room...”
d. “…and all sit around Grandmama’s sturdy old table...”
Refer to the stories “The Relatives Came” and “Grandmama’s Kitchen Table.” Then answer Question 7.

7. In these two stories, Cynthia Rylant teaches us about the importance of family. In “Grandmama’s Kitchen Table,” she talks about the importance of a particular place in a home. In “The Relatives Came,” she talks about the people in her family.

Write an essay that explains how the narrators in both stories show us the importance of family, through their words, thoughts, and actions in the story. Use what you learned about the characters and setting to support your essay.
Answer Key:
1.a.) b
1.b.) a
2.a.) d
2.b.) c
3.a.) c
3.b.) d
4.a.) c
4.b.) d
5.a.) a
5.b.) b
6.a.) d
6.b.) b