

Unit B ▶▶ Geraldine Moore the Poet



PRE-READING

- A Look at the cartoon below.



- B In your opinion, why might a student not listen to the teacher during her classes?
- C Geraldine Moore, the heroine of the story, couldn't concentrate during class. Read the following story and find out why.

New Words

apartment
familiar
furniture

in particular
pause (v)
recognize

sidewalk
traffic
trouble

GERALDINE MOORE

THE POET

by Toni Cade Bambara

Read Part One of the story.

PART ONE

Geraldine paused at the corner to pull up her knee socks. The rubber bands she was using to hold them up made her legs itch¹. She dropped her books on the sidewalk while she gave a good scratch. But when she pulled the socks up again, two fingers poked right through the top of her left one.

“That stupid dog,” she muttered² to herself, grabbing her books and crossing against traffic. “First, he
5 chews up my gym suit and gets me into trouble, and now my socks.”

Geraldine shifted her books to the other hand and kept muttering angrily to herself about Mrs. Watson’s dog, which she minded two days a week for a dollar.

She passed the hot-dog man on the corner and waved. He shrugged³ as if to say business was very bad.

*Must be, she thought to herself. Three guys before
10 you had to pack up and forget it. Nobody’s got hot-dog money around here.*

Geraldine turned down her street, wondering what her sister Anita would have for her lunch. She was glad she didn’t have to eat the free lunches in high
15 school anymore. She was sick of the funny-looking tomato soup and the dried-out cheese sandwiches and those oranges that were more green than orange.

When Geraldine’s mother first took sick and went away, Geraldine had been on her own except when Miss Gladys next door came in on Thursdays and
20 cleaned the apartment and made a meat loaf so Geraldine could have dinner. But in those days Geraldine



¹ itch - להתגרד

² muttered - רשנה

³ shrugged - משך בכתפיו

never quite managed to get breakfast for herself. So she'd sit through social studies class, scraping her feet to cover up the noise of her stomach growling.

Now Anita, Geraldine's older sister, was living at home waiting for her husband to get out of the army⁴.
25 She usually had something good for lunch—chicken and dumplings if she managed to get up in time, or fried fish from the night before and sweet-potato bread.

But even if there was only a hot dog and some baked beans, anything was better than the noisy school lunchroom where monitors kept pushing you into a straight line or rushing you to the tables. Anything was better than that.

30 Geraldine was almost home when she stopped dead. Right outside her building was a pile⁵ of furniture and some boxes. That wasn't anything new. She had seen people get put out in the street before, but this time the ironing board looked familiar. And she recognized the big,
35 ugly sofa standing on its arm, its underbelly⁶ showing the hole where Mrs. Watson's dog had gotten to it.

Miss Gladys was sitting on the stoop, and she looked up and took off her glasses. "Well, Gerry," she said slowly, wiping her glasses on the hem of her dress, "looks like
40 you'll be staying with me for a while." She looked at the men carrying out a big box with an old doll sticking up over the edge. "Anita's upstairs. Go on up and get your lunch." Geraldine stepped past the old woman and almost bumped into the superintendent. He took off his cap to wipe away the sweat.



"Real shame," he said to no one in particular. "Poor people sure got a hard row to hoe."

45 "That's the truth," said Miss Gladys, standing up with her hands on her hips to watch the men set things on the sidewalk.

Upstairs, Geraldine went into the apartment and found Anita in the kitchen.

"I dunno, Gerry," Anita said. "I just don't know what we're going to do. But everything's going to be all right soon as Ma gets well." Anita's voice cracked as she set a bowl of soup before Geraldine.

50 "What's this?" Geraldine said.

"It's tomato soup, Gerry."

Geraldine was about to say something. But when she looked up at her big sister, she saw how Anita's face was getting all twisted as she began to cry.

⁴ army - צבא

⁵ pile - ערימה

⁶ underbelly - תחתית

 **BASIC UNDERSTANDING**
 **Vocabulary**

A Match each word in A to its definition in B.

A

1. traffic
2. furniture
3. in particular
4. apartment
5. sidewalk
6. recognize

B

- a. a place next to the road for people to walk on
- b. a part of a building where people live
- c. things such as tables, chairs and beds that are in a house
- d. the cars and other vehicles on the road
- e. know someone or something that you have seen before
- f. especially

B Circle the correct answers.

1. I usually wear soft colors. **In particular**, I like *red / blue*.
2. Because there was a lot of **traffic**, we got to the wedding *early / late*.
3. When the speaker **paused**, the audience *listened to his talk / waited for him to continue*.
4. She looks **familiar**. I *know her from somewhere / have never seen her before*.
5. When I have **trouble** with my school work, I *finish it quickly / ask for help*.

C Complete the passage using the words below.

apartment • familiar • furniture • paused • recognized • sidewalk • trouble

Geraldine's life was not easy. The rubber bands on her socks made her legs itch, and she dropped her books when she ¹ to scratch. She muttered to herself as she crossed the street against the traffic.

Geraldine's mother went away when she got sick, and Geraldine had to manage on her own. She never had breakfast before she went to school, so she had ² focusing on her schoolwork.

One day, when Geraldine came home, she saw a pile of ³ on the ⁴ near her house. She noticed that the ironing board looked ⁵, and she also ⁶ her own big, ugly sofa.

Her neighbor, Miss Gladys, offered to have Geraldine stay with her in her ⁷ for a while.

→ LOTS

D Copy sentences from the story that prove the following.

1. Geraldine made her own money.
2. Geraldine was sometimes really hungry.
3. Miss Gladys offered to take care of Geraldine.
4. The superintendent felt sorry for Geraldine.
5. Anita broke down in front of her sister.

E Answer the following questions.

1. What was wrong with Geraldine's socks?
2. What did Geraldine think when the hot-dog man shrugged?
3. What did Geraldine think of the free lunches at the high school?
4. How did Miss Gladys take care of Geraldine when her mother first got sick?
5. What did Geraldine see outside her house?
6. What did Anita tell Geraldine in order to comfort her?



ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

1. Geraldine faces poverty daily. Prove it from the text. In your answer, refer to the following aspects:
 - ▶ her clothes
 - ▶ her neighborhood
 - ▶ her food
2. Does Geraldine think the hot-dog man will continue working in her neighborhood? How do you know?
3. Why do you think Anita started crying when she spoke about her mother?
4. Explain how Anita treats Geraldine and why you think she acts that way.
5. Compare the conditions of Geraldine's life to the conditions of your own life. In your answer, refer to the following aspects:
 - ▶ apartment
 - ▶ food
 - ▶ problems
 - ▶ hopes

New Words

as
assignment
column
express (v)

figure (n)
have to do with
image
repeat

warn
wonder (v)

Read Part Two of the story.

PART TWO

That afternoon, Mr. Stern, the geometry teacher, started drawing cubes and cylinders on the board. Geraldine sat at her desk adding up a column of figures in her notebook—the rent, the light and gas bills, a new gym suit, some socks. Maybe they would move somewhere else, and she could have her own room. Geraldine turned the squares and triangles into little houses in the country.

“For your homework,” Mr. Stern was saying with his back to the class, “set up your problems this way.” He wrote GIVEN: in large letters, and then gave the formula¹ for the first problem. Then he wrote TO FIND: and listed three items they were to include in their answers.

Geraldine started to raise her hand to ask what all these squares and angles had to do with solving real problems, like the ones she had. *Better not*, she warned herself, and sat on her hands. *Your big mouth got you in trouble last term.*

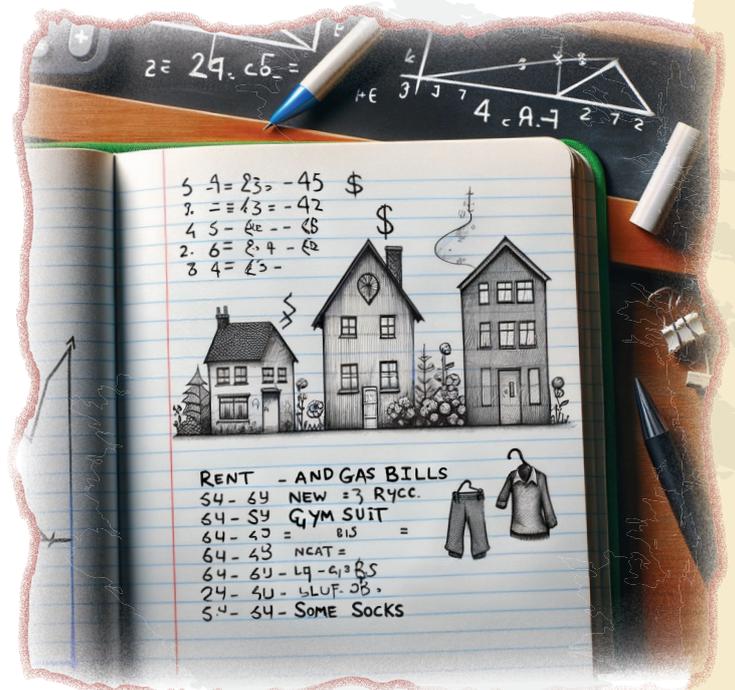
In hygiene class, Mrs. Potter kept saying that the body was a wonderful machine. Every time Geraldine looked up from her notebook, she would hear the same thing. “Right now, your body is manufacturing² all the proteins and tissues and energy you will need to get through tomorrow.”

And Geraldine kept wondering, *How? How does my body know what it will need, when I don't even know what I'll need to get through tomorrow?*

As she headed down the hall to her next class, Geraldine remembered that she hadn't done the homework for English. Mrs. Scott had said to write a poem, and Geraldine had meant to do it at lunchtime. After all, there was nothing to it—a flower here, a raindrop there, moon, June, rose, nose. But the men carrying off the furniture had made her forget.

“And now put away your books,” Mrs. Scott was saying as Geraldine tried to scribble a poem quickly. “Today we can give King Arthur's knights a rest. Let's talk about poetry.”

Mrs. Scott moved up and down the aisles, talking about her favorite poems and reciting a line now and then. She got very excited whenever she passed a desk and could pick up the homework from a student who



¹ formula - נוסחה

² manufacturing - מיצר

had remembered to do the assignment.

“A poem is your own special way of saying what you feel and what you see,” Mrs. Scott went on, her lips moist. It was her favorite subject.

35 “Some poets write about the light that... that... makes the world sunny,” she said, passing Geraldine’s desk. “Sometimes an idea takes the form of a picture—an image.”

For almost half an hour, Mrs. Scott stood at the front of the room, reading poems and talking about the lives of the great poets. Geraldine drew more houses, and designs for curtains.

40 “So for those who haven’t done their homework, try it now,” Mrs. Scott said. “Try expressing what it is like to be... to be alive in this... this glorious³ world.”

“Oh, brother,” Geraldine muttered to herself as Mrs. Scott moved up and down the aisles again, waving her hands and leaning over the students’ shoulders and saying, “That’s nice,” or “Keep trying.” Finally, she came to Geraldine’s desk and stopped, looking down at her.

45 “I can’t write a poem,” Geraldine said flatly, before she even realized she was going to speak at all. She said it very loudly, and the whole class looked up. “And why not?” Mrs. Scott asked, looking hurt.

“I can’t write a poem, Mrs. Scott, because nothing lovely’s been happening in my life. I haven’t seen a flower since Mother’s Day, and the sun don’t even shine on my side of the street. No robins come sing on my window sill.”

50 Geraldine swallowed hard. She thought about saying that her father doesn’t even come to visit anymore but changed her mind. “Just the rain comes,” she went on, “and the bills come, and the men to move out our furniture. I’m sorry, but I can’t write no pretty poem.”

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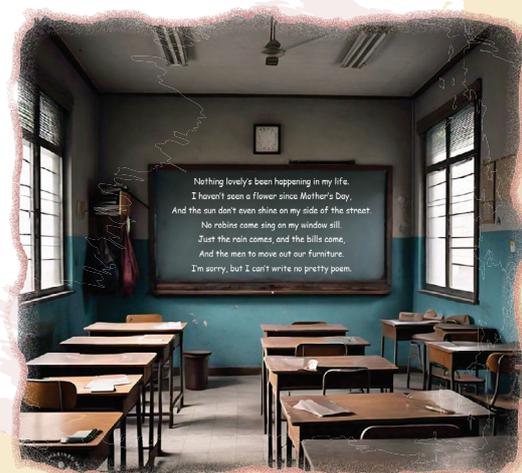
Teddy Johnson leaned over and was about to giggle and crack the whole class up, but Mrs. Scott looked so serious that he changed his mind.

55 “You have just said the most... the most poetic thing, Geraldine Moore,” said Mrs. Scott. Her hands flew up to touch the silk scarf around her neck.

“Nothing lovely’s been happening in my life.” She repeated it so quietly that everyone had to lean forward to hear.

60 “Class,” Mrs. Scott said very sadly, clearing her throat, “you have just heard the best poem you will ever hear. She went to the board and stood there for a long time staring at the chalk in her hand.

“I’d like you to copy it down,” she said. She wrote it just as Geraldine had said it, bad grammar and all.



³ glorious - מרהיב

Nothing lovely's been happening in my life.

I haven't seen a flower since Mother's Day,

65 *And the sun don't even shine on my side of the street.*

No robins come sing on my window sill.

Just the rain comes, and the bills come,

And the men to move out our furniture.

I'm sorry, but I can't write no pretty poem.

70 Mrs. Scott stopped writing, but she kept her back to the class for a long time —long after Geraldine had closed her notebook.

And even when the bell rang, and everyone came over to smile at Geraldine or to tap her on the shoulder or to kid her about being the school poet, Geraldine waited for Mrs. Scott to put the chalk down and turn around. Finally Geraldine stacked up her books and started to leave. Then she thought she heard
75 a whimper⁴—the way Mrs. Watson's dog whimpered sometimes—and she saw Mrs. Scott's shoulders shake a little.

⁴ whimper - יבבה

BASIC UNDERSTANDING

Vocabulary

A

Choose the correct answers.

- If someone **warns** you about something, it means that ...
 - there may be danger.
 - something good is about to happen.
- When you **repeat** something, it means that you ...
 - do it again.
 - do it better.
- An **assignment** is work that ...
 - you have to find.
 - you are given to do.
- An **image** is something ...
 - you can hear.
 - you can see.

→ LOTS



Answer the following questions.

1. How do you know that Geraldine wasn't concentrating on the math lesson?
2. What homework did the math teacher give?
3. What scientific fact did the hygiene teacher mention?
4. What comparison did Geraldine make between her body and herself?
5. Why didn't Geraldine do the writing assignment for English class?
6. Describe Mrs. Scott. In your answer, refer to her clothing, the way she teaches literature, and the way she treats her students.
7. How did Mrs. Scott define poetry?
8. How did Geraldine explain the fact that she couldn't write a poem?
9. How did Mrs. Scott react to Geraldine's answer?
10. How did Geraldine's classmates react to her poem after Mrs. Scott wrote it on the board?



ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Answer the following questions.

1. Choose a character trait of Miss Gladys' that makes her a good person. Explain how Miss Gladys uses this character trait to help Geraldine.
2. Why do you think Geraldine had trouble with school? Support your with lines answer from the story.
3. Why do you think Geraldine draws houses?
- ⊕ 4. Think about Mrs. Scott's definition of poetry. What makes Geraldine's poem so good?
- ⊕ 5. Why do you think Geraldine's poem affected Mrs. Scott the way it did? Give TWO reasons .
6. What is the message of the story? Do you think this message is important? Explain.
7. Did you like the end of the story? If you liked the end of the story, explain why. If you didn't like the end of the story, describe how you would change it.



LITERARY TERMS

A **character** is a person or a thing presented as a person.

The **hero** or **heroine** is a man or woman who is the central figure in an event or literary work. The hero or heroine is usually courageous and has a high moral character.

1. Who are the characters in the story?
2. Who is the heroine in the story? Explain why.
- ⊕ 3. What forces must the heroine in the story overcome?



DEVELOP YOUR THINKING SKILLS

Explaining Cause and Effect



Look at the picture below. Explain how the picture demonstrates cause and effect.



Fill in the chart below by adding a possible cause or effect in each row.

	Cause	Effect
1.		Your friend is angry with you.
2.	You accidentally spill water on your friend's painting.	
3.		You realize the power of words.
4.	You don't bring enough water for the trip.	
5.		You need to ask for help.

Explaining cause and effect - This thinking skill enables you to describe and explain the causal relationships between actions or events in a text.

To determine the **cause**, ask the question, "Why did it happen?"

To determine the **effect**, ask the question, "What happened as a result?"

Vocabulary for Explaining Cause and Effect

as a result (of)	consequence	encourage	outcome
because	due to	if ... then	result (n)
cause (n, v)	effect	in order to	thanks to

C Answer the following questions using the vocabulary above.

1. Why was the furniture from Geraldine's home put out on the street?
2. Geraldine wanted to ask the math teacher what squares and triangles had to do with real problems. Why didn't she ask?
3. How did Mrs. Scott's reaction affect Geraldine's classmates?



DEVELOP YOUR THINKING SKILLS

Predicting

A Look at the picture below and try to predict what is going to happen. Base your prediction on the details you see in the picture.



B Read the descriptions of the situations below and answer the questions that follow.

- ▶ You are going to have a fair at school. What do you expect will happen?
- ▶ You lost your mother's cell phone. How do you think she will react when she finds out?
- ▶ Your school is going to have a summer camp. Predict a dilemma you might have before or during the camp.

C Describe another situation from your own life in which you can predict what will happen next.

Predicting - This thinking skill enables you to predict the content or the outcome of a text, either before you read or as you are reading, based on available information.

Vocabulary for Predicting

clue	expectation	prediction
expect	predict	suggest

D Answer the following questions using the vocabulary above.

1. Do you think Geraldine will write more poems? Base your answer on the story.
2. Do you think Mrs. Scott will help Geraldine in her personal life?
3. Who do you think will take care of Geraldine in the future? Explain.

BRIDGING TEXT AND CONTEXT

Toni Cade Bambara, born on March 25, 1939, lived the first ten years of her life in Harlem, a poor black area in the inner city of New York. From a young age, she always wished to talk to other people. Bambara "adopted" people to fill the place in her life for relatives, especially grandmothers.

- 5 Bambara was educated at the City University of New York, studied arts in Europe, and served as a social worker and community organizer. Later, she began teaching at a number of universities including Rutgers University. She also became involved in many socio-political issues and community groups.

Bambara was an author, editor, educator, and civil rights activist.



➔ How does this passage add to your understanding of the story?

**POST-READING ACTIVITIES**

Choose ONE of the following options and complete the task in 80-100 words.

1. Write a letter to Geraldine to give her support. In your letter, refer to the problems Geraldine faces in the story.
2. Write a conversation between Geraldine and Mrs. Scott right after the story ends. In the conversation, refer to details from the story.
3. Think of items that can symbolize four different characters from the story. Explain why you chose each item for each character. In your explanations, refer to details in the story.
4. Imagine you are a reporter for a newspaper. Write an interview between you and the famous Geraldine Moore 10 years after her talent is discovered. In the interview, refer to events and details from the story.

→ Vocabulary Overview

apartment	effect	image	sidewalk
as	encourage	in order to	suggest
as a result (of)	expect	in particular	thanks to
assignment	expectation	outcome	traffic
because	express (v)	pause (v)	trouble
cause (n, v)	familiar	predict	warn
clue	figure (n)	prediction	wonder (v)
column	furniture	recognize	
consequence	have to do with	repeat	
due to	if ... then	result (n)	