Debts

1 Daddy is thinking
of taking a loan from Mr. Roosevelt and his men,
to get some new wheat planted
where the winter crop has spindled out and died.

2 Mr. Roosevelt promises
Daddy won’t have to pay a dime
till the crop comes in.

3 Daddy says, “I can turn the fields over,
start again.
It’s sure to rain soon.
Wheat’s sure to grow.”

4 Ma says, “What if it doesn’t?”

5 Daddy takes off his hat,
roughs up his hair,
puts the hat back on.
“Course it’ll rain,” he says.

6 Ma says, “Bay,
it hasn’t rained enough to grow wheat in
three years.”

7 Daddy looks like a fight brewing.
He takes that red face of his out to the barn,
to keep from feuding with my pregnant ma.

8 I ask Ma
how,
after all this time,
Daddy still believes in rain.

8 “Well, it rains enough,” Ma says,
“now and again,
to keep a person hoping.
But even if it didn’t
your daddy would have to believe.
It’s coming on spring,
and he’s a farmer.”

March 1934
First Rain

1 Sunday night,
I stretch my legs in my iron bed
under the roof,
I place a wet cloth over my nose to keep
from breathing dust
and wipe the grime tracings from around my mouth,
and shiver, thinking of Ma.
I am kept company by the sound of my heart
drumming.

2 Restless,
I tangle in the dusty sheets,
sending the sand flying,
cursing the grit against my skin,
between my teeth,
under my lids,
swearing I'll leave this forsaken place.

3 I hear the first drops.
Like the tapping of a stranger
at the door of a dream,
the rain changes everything.
It strokes the roof,
streaking the dusty tin,
poning,
a concert of rain notes,
spilling from gutters,
gushing through gullies,
soaking into the thirsty earth outside.

4 Monday morning dawns,
cloaked in mist.
I button into my dress, slip on my sweater,
and push my way off the porch,
sticking my face into the fog,
into the moist skin of the fog.
The sound of dripping surrounds me as I
walk to town.

5 Soaked to my underwear,
I can't bear to go
through the schoolhouse door,
I want only to stand in the rain.

6 Monday afternoon,
Joe De La Flor brushes mud from his horse,
Mr. Kincannon hires my father
to pull his Olds out of the muck on Route 64.

7 And later,
when the clouds lift,
the farmers, surveying their fields,

8 nod their heads as
the frail stalks revive,3
everyone, everything, grateful for this moment,
free of the
weight of dust.

January 1935

3 "the frail stalks revive" — the weakened plants come back to life

Teacher Guide for FAST-R Passage: Out of the Dust

The annotated answer key below highlights common reasons students might choose each answer, and the sidebar gives more insight into the question types, to help you understand patterns of student responses. Always make time to follow up with students in conferences or small groups to probe their thinking, teach in response to patterns, and help them apply effective reading and thinking strategies to their everyday reading.

Note: You may find it helpful to refer to the “Types and Levels of Questions on FAST-R” sheet from your teacher resource folder as you examine your students’ responses. The icon in the right-hand column, below, corresponds to that sheet’s more detailed explanations of the kinds of thinking each type of question asks of readers.

1. What problem does the speaker’s family face in the poem “Debts”?  
A. Mr. Roosevelt is taking advantage of them. (OOP2, ¶1)  
B. Too much rain has washed away their crops for three years in a row. (OOP2, ¶5)  
✓ C. A lack of rain has killed their crops for three years in a row. (¶5)  
D. Daddy no longer believes farming is a good idea. (OOP2, ¶8)

2. What do stanzas 1 through 5 of “Debts” show about the farm?  
✓ A. It has not been successful.  
B. It is different from other farms in the area. (OOB)  
C. It is not large enough for Daddy. (OOB)  
D. It has been taken over by Mr. Roosevelt. (OOP2)

3. In stanza 4 of “Debts,” what is the most likely reason that Daddy roughs up his hair?  
A. He is getting ready to go to work. (OOB)  
B. He is drying his hair after the rain. (OOP2)  
C. He is uncomfortable without his hat. (OOB)  
✓ D. He is worried about borrowing the money.

4. In stanza 6 of “Debts,” what does the word **feuding** mean?  
A. talking (OOP2)  
B. leaving (OOP2)  
C. working (OOP2)  
✓ D. quarreling

5. Based on evidence from the poems, what was the weather like between March 1934 and January 1935?  
A. It was mostly rainy. (OOP2)  
✓ B. It was mostly dry.  
C. It was mostly misty. (OOB)  
D. It was mostly hot. (OOB)
### Grades 5-6 • Poetry • “Out of the Dust”

6. In stanza 1 of “First Rain,” why does the speaker place a wet cloth over her nose?
- **✓** A. to avoid breathing the dust that fills the air (OOO)
- B. to wash her face like her Ma told her to (OOO)
- C. to warm her so she’ll stop shivering (OOP)
- D. to help calm her drumming heart (OOP)

7. Read the lines from “First Rain” in the box below.

Like the tapping of a stranger at the door of a dream

What is the effect of comparing the rain to a stranger at the door?
- **✓** A. It shows that the rain is a surprise.
- B. It shows that the rain is a problem. (OOP)
- C. It shows that the speaker is dreaming. (OOP)
- D. It shows that the speaker is frightened. (OOO)

8. In stanza 3 of “First Rain,” why does the speaker compare the sound of the rain to “a concert of rain notes”?
- A. She thinks it is the radio. (OOO)
- **✓** B. It sounds like music to her.
- C. She thinks she is dreaming. (OOP)
- D. It reminds her of a song she knows. (OOO)

9. In stanza 5 of “First Rain,” why can’t the speaker bear to go through the schoolhouse door?
- A. She is embarrassed to be soaking wet. (OOO)
- **✓** B. She wants to continue experiencing the rain outside.
- C. She is ashamed that her family’s farm is doing poorly. (OOP)
- D. She wants to be with her pregnant mother. (OOP)

10. Based on stanzas 7 and 8 of “First Rain,” how do the farmers most likely feel after the rain?
- A. frail and weighted down (OOP)
- B. soaked and muddy (OOO)
- **✓** C. hopeful and thankful
- D. proud and revived (OOP)

**FE2: Recognize evidence explicitly stated at multiple locations or with varied wording in the text**

**MI5: Interpret meaning by using an understanding of literary concepts**

**MI1: Interpret implicit meaning from words in context**

**MI1: Determine implicit meaning from words in context**
These selections are from Karen Hesse’s book Out of the Dust. The speaker is a young girl who lives with her family in the Midwest during the 1930s. At that time, serious drought destroyed the farmers’ crops and caused great dust storms. People were very poor and some farmers lost their farms. Read the selections and answer the questions that follow.

**Debts**

1 Daddy is thinking
   of taking a loan from Mr. Roosevelt and his men,
   to get some new wheat planted
   where the winter crop has spindled out and died.2
   Mr. Roosevelt promises
   Daddy won’t have to pay a dime
   till the crop comes in.

2 Daddy says,
   “I can turn the fields over,
   start again.
   It’s sure to rain soon.
   Wheat’s sure to grow.”

3 Ma says, “What if it doesn’t?”

4 Daddy takes off his hat,
   roughs up his hair,
   puts the hat back on.
   “Course it’ll rain,” he says.

5 Ma says, “Bay,
   it hasn’t rained enough to grow wheat in
   three years.”

6 Daddy looks like a fight brewing.
   He takes that red face of his out to the barn,
   to keep from feuding with my pregnant ma.

7 I ask Ma
   how,
   after all this time,
   Daddy still believes in rain.

8 “Well, it rains enough,” Ma says,
   “now and again,
   to keep a person hoping.
   But even if it didn’t
   your daddy would have to believe.
   It’s coming on spring,
   and he’s a farmer.”

March 1934

**Out of the Dust**

*by Karen Hesse*

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1 *Debts* — money owed to another

2 “*where the winter crop has spindled out and died*” — where the wheat plants have grown thin and died
First Rain

1 Sunday night,
    I stretch my legs in my iron bed
    under the roof.
    I place a wet cloth over my nose to keep
    from breathing dust
    and wipe the grime tracings from around my
    mouth,
    and shiver, thinking of Ma.
    I am kept company by the sound of my heart
    drumming.

2 Restless,
    I tangle in the dusty sheets,
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    cloaked in mist.
    I button into my dress, slip on my sweater,
    and push my way off the porch,
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    The sound of dripping surrounds me as I
    walk to town.

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    I can’t bear to go
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    Joe De La Flor brushes mud from his horse,
    Mr. Kincannon hires my father
    to pull his Olds out of the muck on Route 64.

7 And later,
    when the clouds lift,
    the farmers, surveying their fields,
    nod their heads as
    the frail stalks revive,3
    everyone, everything, grateful for this moment,
    free of the
    weight of dust.

    January 1935

3 “the frail stalks revive” — the weakened plants come
    back to life
Directions: Answer the following multiple-choice questions by filling in the circle for the best answer on your answer sheet.

1. What problem does the speaker’s family face in the poem “Debts”?
   A. Mr. Roosevelt is taking advantage of them.
   B. Too much rain has washed away their crops for three years in a row.
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2. What do stanzas 1 through 5 of “Debts” show about the farm?
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   B. leaving
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   D. quarreling

5. Based on evidence from the poems, what was the weather like between March 1934 and January 1935?
   A. It was mostly rainy.
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6. In stanza 1 of “First Rain,” why does the speaker place a wet cloth over her nose?
   A. to avoid breathing the dust that fills the air
   B. to wash her face like her Ma told her to
   C. to warm her so she’ll stop shivering
   D. to help calm her drumming heart

7. Read the lines from “First Rain” in the box below.

   Like the tapping of a stranger
   at the door of a dream

What is the effect of comparing the rain to a stranger at the door?
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    A. frail and weighted down
    B. soaked and muddy
    C. hopeful and thankful
    D. proud and revived
### FAST-R Answer Sheet

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**Completely fill the circle for the correct answer.**

1. A B C D
2. A B C D
3. A B C D
4. A B C D
5. A B C D
6. A B C D
7. A B C D
8. A B C D
9. A B C D
10. A B C D

**Write your answer to the open response prompt in the lined space below if your teacher directs you to do so.**

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### OFFICE USE ONLY

RESEARCH: Y N
OPEN RESPONSE: 1 2 3 4