

Instrumental Talent

A young musician fiddles her way to the top of the South's music scene.

Ruby Jane Smith dreams of becoming a full-time musician when she grows up, but people who have heard her perform say she already sounds like a pro. The teen from Columbus, Mississippi, plays the fiddle, her specialty, and 10 other musical instruments. In 2005, she won the Mississippi State Fiddler title after wowing judges with her talents. Ruby Jane recently took a break from the stage to talk to *WR News*.

***WR News:* Why do you love music?**

Ruby Jane Smith: It really brings people together. You can be sad and put on some music and be happy.

***WR News:* How long have you been playing the fiddle?**

Ruby Jane: When I was 7, I went to a violin camp. After class, some of the older kids would play fiddle music. When I heard them play, I said to my mom, "That's the kind of music I want to play!" So we found a fiddle teacher, and I've been doing bluegrass/country music for three or four years now.

***WR News:* How would you describe bluegrass music?**

Ruby Jane: Bluegrass is a lot like country, but it's faster. It's real upbeat and warm.

***WR News:* What has been your favorite performance?**

Ruby Jane: One of my favorites was playing the Grand Ole Opry. It's actually one of the most comfortable stages I've ever been on.

***WR News:* Do you ever get nervous before a show?**

Ruby Jane: I always get a little nervous. But it seems the moment I step onstage, all the nerves go away because I enjoy performing so much!

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. How many instruments does Ruby Jane play?

- A 10
- B 11
- C 12
- D 13

2. In this passage, how does Ruby Jane describe bluegrass music?

- A slow and sad
- B relaxing and quiet
- C upbeat and warm
- D loud and nervous

3. After reading the passage, what can you conclude about Ruby Jane?

- A She loves playing the fiddle and performing.
- B She likes playing music but doesn't like performing.
- C She would rather play the violin than the fiddle.
- D She wants to take a break from performing onstage.

4. Read this sentence from the passage: "The teen from Columbus, Mississippi plays the fiddle, her specialty, and 10 other musical instruments."

In this sentence, the word **specialty** means

- A an exciting activity
- B a type of instrument
- C a special memory
- D a special skill

5. Which statement supports the main idea of this passage?

- A Ruby Jane is a teen from Columbus, Mississippi.
- B Some people get nervous when being onstage.
- C Music has the power to bring people together.
- D Ruby Jane is a young fiddler with talent.

6. Why did Ruby Jane decide to play the fiddle?

7. Why is music important to Ruby Jane? How do you know? Cite evidence from the text to support your answer.

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

Country music is a lot like bluegrass, _____ it's slower.

- A for
- B but
- C and
- D or

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

In 2005, Ruby Jane Smith won the Mississippi State Fiddler title by wowing the judges.

Who? _____

(did) What? _____

How? by wowing the judges

When? _____

10. **Vocabulary Word:** pro: a professional.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: _____

Teacher Guide and Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 760

Featured Text Structure: Descriptive – the writer explains, defines, or illustrates a concept or topic

Passage Summary: “Instrumental Talent” is an interview with Ruby Jane Smith, a young musician from Columbus, Mississippi. She won the Mississippi State Fiddler title in 2005.

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6. Why did Ruby Jane decide to play the fiddle?

Suggested answer: When Ruby Jane was at violin camp, she heard some of the older kids playing fiddle music and decided that was the kind of music she wanted to play. [paragraph 3]

7. Why is music important to Ruby Jane? How do you know? Cite evidence from the text to support your answer.

Suggested answer: Music is important to Ruby Jane because she loves it. She dreams of becoming a full-time musician when she grows up. [paragraph 1] Ruby believes music “brings people together” and can cheer people up when they are sad. [paragraph 2]

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

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Who? **Ruby Jane Smith**

(did) What? **won the Mississippi State Fiddler title**

How? by wowing the judges

When? **in 2005**

10. **Vocabulary Word:** pro: a professional.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: answers may vary.