



# **English I**

## **Short Answer Single Selection Scoring Guide**

**April 2014**

**Read the selection and choose the best answer to each question. Then fill in the answer on your answer document.**

## **Hearing the Sweetest Songs**

*by Nicolette Toussaint*

Newsweek

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- 1 Every year when I was a child, a man brought a big, black, squeaking machine to school. When he discovered I couldn't hear all his peeps and squeaks, he would get very excited. The nurse would draw a chart with a deep canyon in it. Then I would listen to the squeaks two or three times, while the adults—who were all acting very, very nice—would watch me raise my hand. Sometimes I couldn't tell whether I heard the squeaks or just imagined them, but I liked being the center of attention.
- 2 My parents said I lost my hearing to pneumonia as a baby, but I knew I hadn't *lost* anything. None of my parts had dropped off. Nothing had changed: if I wanted to listen to Beethoven, I could put my head between the speakers and turn the dial up to 7. I could hear jets at the airport a block away. I could hear my mom when she was in the same room—if I wanted to. I could even hear my cat purr if I put my good ear right on top of him.
- 3 I wasn't aware of *not* hearing until I began to wear a hearing aid at the age of 30. It shattered my peace: shoes creaking, papers crackling, pencils tapping, phones ringing, refrigerators humming, people cracking knuckles, clearing throats and blowing noses! Cars, bikes, dogs, cats, kids all seemed to appear from nowhere and fly right at me.
- 4 I was constantly startled, unnerved, agitated—exhausted. I felt as though inquisitorial Nazis in an old World War II film were burning the side of my head with a merciless white spotlight. Under that onslaught, I had to break down and confess: I couldn't hear. Suddenly, I began to discover many things I couldn't do.
- 5 I couldn't identify sounds. One afternoon, while lying on my side watching a football game on TV, I kept hearing a noise that sounded like my cat playing with a flexible-spring doorstop. I checked, but the cat was asleep. Finally, I happened to lift my head as the noise occurred. Heard through my good ear, the metallic buzz turned out to be the referee's whistle.
- 6 I couldn't tell where sounds came from. I couldn't find my phone under the blizzard of papers on my desk. The more it rang, the deeper I dug. I shoveled mounds of paper onto the floor and finally had to track it down by following the cord from the wall.

- 7 When I lived alone, I felt helpless because I couldn't hear alarm clocks, vulnerable because I couldn't hear the front door open and frightened because I wouldn't hear a burglar until it was too late.
- 8 Then one day I missed a job interview because of the phone. I had gotten off the subway 20 minutes early, eager and dressed to the nines. But the address I had written down didn't exist! I must have misheard it. I searched the street, becoming overheated, late and frantic, knowing that if I confessed that I couldn't hear on the phone, I would make my odds of getting hired even worse.
- 9 For the first time, I felt unequal, disadvantaged and disabled. Now that I had something to compare, I knew that I *had* lost something: not just my hearing, but my independence and my sense of wholeness. I had always hated to be seen as inferior, so I never mentioned my lack of hearing. Unlike a wheelchair or a white cane, my disability doesn't announce itself. For most of my life, I chose to pass as abled, and I thought I did it quite well.
- 10 But after I got the hearing aid, a business friend said, "You know, Nicolette, you think you get away with not hearing, but you don't. Sometimes in meetings you answer the wrong question. People don't know you can't hear, so they think you're daydreaming, eccentric, stupid—or just plain rude. It would be better to just tell them."
- 11 I wondered about that then, and I still do. If I tell, I risk being seen as *unable* rather than *disabled*. Sometimes, when I say I can't hear, the waiter will turn to my companion and say, "What does she want?" as though I have lost my power of speech.
- 12 If I tell, people may see *only* my disability. Once someone is labeled "deaf," "crippled," "mute" or "aged," that's too often all they are. I'm a writer, a painter, a slapdash housekeeper, a gardener who grows wondrous roses; my hearing is just part of the whole. It's a tender part, and you should handle it with care. But like most people with a disability, I don't mind if you ask about it.
- 13 In fact, you should ask, because it's an important part of me, something my friends see as part of my character. My friend Anne always rests a hand on my elbow in parking lots, since several times, drivers who assume that I hear them have nearly run me over. When I hold my head at a certain angle, my husband, Mason, will say, "It's a plane" or "It's a siren." And my mother loves to laugh about the times I *thought* I heard: last week I was told that "the Minotaurs in the garden are getting out of hand." I imagined capering bullmen and I was disappointed to learn that all we had in the garden were overgrown "baby tears."
- 14 Not hearing can be funny, or frustrating. And once in a while, it can be the cause of something truly transcendent. One morning at the shore I was listening to the ocean when Mason said, "Hear the bird?" What bird? I listened hard until I heard a faint, unbirdlike, croaking sound. If he hadn't

mentioned it I would never have noticed it. As I listened, slowly I began to hear—or perhaps imagine—a distant song. Did I *really* hear it? Or just hear in my heart what he shared with me? I don't care. Songs imagined are as sweet as songs heard, and songs shared are sweeter still.

15 That sharing is what I want for all of us. We're all just temporarily abled, and every one of us, if we live long enough, will become disabled in some way. Those of us who have gotten there first can tell you how to cope with phones and alarm clocks. About ways of holding a book, opening a door and leaning on a crutch all at the same time. And what it's like to give up in despair on Thursday, then begin all over again on Friday, because there's no other choice—and because the roses are beginning to bud in the garden.

16 These are conversations we all should have, and it's not that hard to begin. Just let me see your lips when you speak. Stay in the same room. Don't shout. And ask what you want to know.

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## **English I Short Answer Single Selection**

After reading "Hearing the Sweetest Songs," do you think the author considers herself disabled? Explain your answer and support it with evidence from the selection.

## **Score Point 0 – Insufficient Response to the Question**

**Insufficient responses indicate a very limited reading performance.**

These responses have one of the following problems.

- The idea is not an answer to the question asked.
- The idea is incorrect because it is not based on the text.
- The idea is too general, vague, or unclear to determine whether it is reasonable.
- No idea is present. Sometimes the response contains only text evidence. At other times there appears to be an idea; however, this idea cannot be considered an answer to the question because it merely repeats verbatim, or “echoes,” the text evidence.

No, because she always put down able people and would be looked down from other people because she would answer the wrong question or be slow to do something and it even states that she only felt unequal once in Paragraph 9 "For the first time I felt unequal, disadvantaged, and disabled."

**Score Point 0**

This response is insufficient because the student presents an idea that is incorrect. The idea that the author does not feel disabled because she "put down able people" and "only felt unequal once" cannot be supported with textual evidence from the selection.

Yes, I do consider her disabled because unlike people that can hear they could get jobs easier by listening to what the boss wants and not try to figure out what he is trying to say. But even though she can't hear when she does understand what they are saying she can do what they are asking with no problem. But it's harder to get a job when you can't hear like in the passage she would answer wrong questions so she is considered disabled.

**Score Point 0**

This response is insufficient because the idea is not an answer to the question asked. The student offers a personal opinion about why he considers the author disabled; however, he does not address whether the author considers herself disabled.

I think the author considers her self disabled but she believes eventually everyone will have some sort of disability. She states this when she says "We're all just temporarily abled and everyone of us, if we live long enough, will become disabled in some way."

**Score Point 0**

The student attempts to answer the question; however, no original idea is present. The student attempts to explain why the author considers herself disabled, but this explanation is merely an “echo” because it is a paraphrase of the text the student is using as evidence. Because the student has not included an original idea, this response indicates a very limited reading performance.

yes, I think the author of the story considers herself disabled because she states "For the first time, I felt unequal, disadvantaged and disabled." She also says "I risk being seen unable rather than disabled."

**Score Point 0**

This response is insufficient because no idea is present. The student asserts that the author considers herself disabled and then provides two direct quotations. The student does not explain why she thinks the author considers herself disabled. Because this response contains only text evidence, it indicates that the student’s reading performance is very limited.



## **Score Point 1 — Partially Sufficient Response to the Question**

**Partially sufficient responses indicate a basic reading performance.**

These responses have one of the following characteristics.

- The idea is reasonable, but the response contains no text evidence.
- The idea is reasonable, but the text evidence is flawed and does not adequately support the idea. Text evidence is considered inadequate when it is
  - only a general reference to the text,
  - too partial to support the idea,
  - weakly linked to the idea, or
  - used inappropriately because it wrongly manipulates the meaning of the text.
- The idea needs more explanation or specificity even though it is supported with text evidence.
- The idea represents only a literal reading of the text, with or without text evidence.

The author tries and tries her hardest to not consider herself disabled. She tries to live alone, have a normal job, and not tell people about her hearing disability. She tries to tell herself she doesn't consider herself disabled, but in the end, deep down she knows she is disabled.

**Score Point 1**

The student offers the reasonable idea that although the author attempts to avoid being considered disabled by leading a conventional life, she ultimately knows that she is disabled. However, no text evidence is provided to support the idea. Therefore, this response represents a basic reading performance.

In the short story, "Hearing the Sweetest Songs", I think in a sense, the author knows she's disabled in her hearing but doesn't want to be treated different. She wants to be treated just like someone who is able.  
"I wanted to listen to Beethoven."

**Score Point 1**

The student offers the reasonable idea that the author knows she is disabled because of her hearing, but she doesn't want to be treated differently from someone who can hear. However, the text evidence provided is flawed because it is only weakly linked to the idea. The text evidence does not support the idea that the author desires equal treatment despite her disability. Because the text evidence does not directly support the idea, this response is only partially sufficient.

I think the author feels that she isn't disabled. "We are ... in some way." This quote shows that she feels that everyone including her are the same, and although it seems like disabilities are life changing doesn't mean that it has to be life changing for her.

**Score Point 1**

The student offers the reasonable ideas that the author feels that everyone is the same and that having a disability isn't necessarily life-altering. However, the text evidence the student provides is too partial to support the explanation. The student's use of ellipses omits the relevant portion of the quotation, which is needed to support the ideas.

While reading "Hearing the Sweetest Songs" a bunch of mixed emotions come from the authors point of view. The author continually states examples of how stressful it is not being able to hear all the time. The author also shows how she doesn't like being dependent on others but will be if necessary. Then she quickly reiterates on how she can do things just as equally as someone else. Just like in the example where she loses her telephone but eventually finds it anyway. It may have taken her more time and energy to accomplish what someone else could have done fairly quickly. This alone though shows just how she is like everyone else in her own ways. So I believe that the author doesn't consider herself disabled or different from anyone else in anyway.

**Score Point 1**

The student offers several reasonable ideas why the author does not consider herself disabled (*she is like everyone else in her own ways; she can do things just as equally as someone else; the author doesn't consider herself different from anyone else in anyway*). The student attempts to provide relevant text evidence (*like in the example where she loses her telephone but eventually finds it*), but this text is flawed because it functions as only a general text reference and does not sufficiently support the ideas presented. Therefore, this response indicates a basic reading performance.

## **Score Point 2 – Sufficient Response to the Question**

**Sufficient responses indicate a satisfactory reading performance.**

These responses have the following characteristics.

- The idea is reasonable and goes beyond a literal reading of the text. It is explained specifically enough to show that the student can make appropriate connections across the text and draw valid conclusions.
- The text evidence used to support the idea is accurate and relevant.
- The idea and text evidence used to support it are clearly linked.
- The combination of the idea and the text evidence demonstrates a good understanding of the text.

After reading "Hearing the Sweetest Songs," I don't think the author considers herself disabled. For example when the author says, "We're all just temporarily dabled, and everyone of us, if we live long enough, will become disabled in some way." it shows that she believes disabilities are natural and it will happen to everyone in time.

**Score Point 2**

The student offers the reasonable idea that the author does not consider herself disabled because she believes disabilities are natural and will happen to everyone in time. The student provides a direct quotation to support the idea, making this a sufficient response.

The author does consider herself disabled since she cannot hear the sounds around her or she confuses the words that she did not understand. "I couldn't identify sounds!" "I must have misheard it." "I felt unequal, disadvantaged, and disabled!"

**Score Point 2**

The student offers the reasonable idea that the author considers herself disabled since she confuses words and cannot adequately hear the sounds around her. The student supports this idea with several relevant quotations from the text. Therefore, this response represents a satisfactory reading performance.

No, The author does not consider herself to be disabled. In the text Toussaint says "I'm a writer, a painter, a slapdash housekeeper, a gardener who grows wondrous roses; my hearing is just part of the whole." This quote shows that her lack of hearing is not a disability it's a part of who she is.

**Score Point 2**

The student offers the reasonable idea that the author does not consider herself disabled because her lack of hearing is simply a part of who she is. The student supports this idea with a direct quotation, making this a sufficient response.

After reading "Hearing the Sweetest Songs," I do think the narrator considers herself disabled. "If I tell, people may only see my disability. Once someone is labeled "deaf," "crippled," or "aged," that's too often all they are." The narrator recognizes she has a disability. She just doesn't want to tell people about it because that could become her new identity. She calls her hearing problem a disability which leads the reader to think she is disabled.

**Score Point 2**

The student offers the reasonable idea that the author recognizes that she has a disability, but she doesn't want to tell people for fear it could become her new identity. The relevant quotation from the text sufficiently supports the idea. The combination of the idea and the text evidence demonstrates a good understanding of the text, indicating that the student's reading performance is satisfactory.

## **Score Point 3 — Exemplary Response to the Question**

**Exemplary responses indicate an accomplished reading performance.**

These responses have the following characteristics.

- The idea is perceptive and reflects an awareness of the complexities of the text. The student is able to develop a coherent explanation of the idea by making discerning connections across the text.
- The text evidence used to support the idea is specific and well chosen. Overall, the evidence strongly supports the validity of the idea.
- The combination of the idea and the text evidence demonstrates a deep understanding of the text.

Though the author does state that she has a disability, it can still be said that she doesn't consider herself disabled.

The author acknowledges having a disability by claiming that "like most people with a disability, [she doesn't] mind if you ask about it." But having a disability doesn't mean she is completely disabled. She states that she is also "a writer, a painter, a ... housekeeper" and "a gardener who grows wondrous roses." Though she may not be able to hear, she can still do the same things that others with hearing can. The author's lack of hearing is "an important part" of her and adds to her character. In her eyes, that doesn't make her believe she is disabled.

### Score Point 3

The student offers the perceptive idea that while the author considers her inability to hear a disability, she does not consider herself disabled. The student is able to develop a coherent explanation of this idea by explaining that the author's lack of hearing is a part of her identity and character, not something that hinders her abilities and makes her disabled. The combination of the idea and well-chosen direct quotations demonstrates the student's deep understanding of the text in this accomplished reading performance.

I do believe that the author considers herself to be disabled. The author says "Like most people with a disability, I don't mind if you ask about it." This quote shows that instead of denying her disability, as she was at the beginning of the passage, she has learned to embrace it and admit her disability wherever she is asked. There is further proof when she says "those of us who have [been disabled first] can tell you how to cope with the phones and the alarm clocks." When the author says this, she is taking a step further than just admitting she is disabled, she is willing to broadcast her disability and is not ashamed to admit that she is indeed deaf and disabled.

### Score Point 3

In this exemplary response, the student offers the perceptive idea that the author's attitude toward her disability changes from denial to acceptance. The idea is strengthened by the student's explanation of this acceptance: the author embraces her disability by admitting she is disabled without feeling ashamed. The discerning connections the student makes as well as the specific text evidence the student uses strongly support the validity of the idea.



When I read "Hearing the sweetest songs" I did not think the author thought of herself as disabled. When she was little she said she "hadn't lost anything." She said that she could hear lots of stuff, like when she wrote "I could even hear my cat purr if I put my good ear right on top of him." She had tried a hearing aid but it made things too loud and all the different, small noises made her constantly startled. She writes that "It shattered my peace." Sure, she did miss what some people say and she sometimes imagines noises, but she's happy that way. She says "Songs imagined are as sweet as songs heard, and songs shared are sweeter still." "After all, someday we all" will become disabled in some way."

**Score Point 3**

The student presents the reasonable idea that the author does not consider herself disabled because she is able to cope with her hearing loss. Additional analysis clarifies the idea, and the specific and well-chosen quotations strongly support its validity. Overall, this response represents an accomplished reading performance.

No, because the author states, "Not hearing can be funny, or frustrating. And once in a while it can be the cause of something truly transcendent." This shows that the author believes that her lack of hearing is sometimes even greater than being able to hear properly. Also, as the author listens (or imagines) the bird's distant song she wonders if she actually heard it, but instead she thinks, "I don't care. Songs imagined are as sweet as songs heard, and songs shared are sweeter still." This shows that though she knows she is disabled and sometimes at a disadvantage from being unable to hear everything, she still continues to stay in high spirits about her life and the things she hears. She does not care whether or not she actually heard the bird's song through her ears, but instead focuses on the fact that she heard it in her mind's ear or her heart.

**Score Point 3**

The student presents the perceptive idea that the author maintains a positive outlook about her life not only despite her hearing difficulties but also because of them. The student makes discerning connections across the text and uses evidence that is particularly well chosen. The combination of the idea and the text demonstrates that the student has a deep understanding of the selection, making the response exemplary.