

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

# Inundated

By Hayes Davis  
2016

*Hayes Davis is a writer whose first book of poetry, Let Our Eyes Linger, explores themes of family and racial identity. Davis wrote this poem after seeing news coverage of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. As you read, take notes on the questions the speaker asks.*

[1] What tides move in him? At what watermark  
did survival instinct kick in? How much water  
is too high for wading? At what pitch  
of a baby's cry does the father think *diapers,*  
[5] *food,* instead of *too deep, too much wind?* On film



*"Navy-FloodedNewOrleans" by U.S. Navy is in the public domain.*

his trudge out of the French Quarter<sup>1</sup> Walgreens  
will be labeled "LOOTING," his visage,<sup>2</sup> gait<sup>3</sup>  
indistinguishable (to the casual viewer)  
from people clutching stereos, sneakers, alcohol,  
[10] any item the newsroom seems to suggest  
black people grab first. But look closely:

see Huggies under his right arm, gallon of milk  
gripped in his left hand. Who can know his story?  
Who wouldn't grab a 12-pack, if the bad day  
[15] that sends you to Scotch on a Tuesday  
were strung together for months, for lifetimes,  
if what a teenager makes working a summer job  
had to feed a family, if healthcare, a house  
were fleeting dreams? So look again —

[20] he carries milk with the Huggies and he's  
black and he might not have made it home but you  
wouldn't, probably, have heard if he didn't so call him  
father, or husband, maybe Larry, or Junior, handsome,  
thoughtful, drenched, scared, but not "Looter."

1. the oldest section of the city of New Orleans
2. a person's face
3. a person's manner of walking

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## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which TWO statements best express themes of the poem?
  - A. Stealing is only acceptable when a disaster strikes.
  - B. When people do bad things, they deserve negative attention.
  - C. It is wrong to judge the actions of people when they are trying to survive.
  - D. Bias makes people more likely to negatively interpret the actions of black people.
  - E. Natural disasters bring out the worst behavior from people.
  - F. We should do more to help people who are trying to survive a horrible event.
  
2. PART B: Which TWO details from the text best support the answers to Part A?
  - A. "What tides move in him?" (Line 1)
  - B. "How much water / is too high for wading?" (Lines 2-3)
  - C. "any item the newsroom seems to suggest / black people grab first. But look closely" (Lines 10-11)
  - D. "Who can know his story? / Who wouldn't grab a 12-pack, if the bad day" (Lines 13-14)
  - E. "if what a teenager makes working a summer job" (Line 17)
  - F. "so call him / father, or husband, maybe Larry, or Junior, handsome" (Lines 22-23)
  
3. How do the different names the speaker uses to identify the man contribute to the meaning of the poem (Line 23)?
  - A. They show that the man has many roles in his life, which emphasizes that these roles are often erased and replaced by labels.
  - B. They emphasize how stressed the man is about protecting his family, and this conveys the importance of family.
  - C. They explain why the man stole the groceries, which shows how desperate the storm made him.
  - D. They stress how the man has a family who would miss him if he didn't come home.
  
4. How does the speaker's repeated suggestion that the reader "look" and "see" contribute to the poem's theme?

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