

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

## Identity

By Julio Noboa  
1973

*Julio Noboa is a poet, author, and former professor of social studies at the University of Texas at El Paso. Through his writing and career, Dr. Noboa is known for advocating for better representation of Latin American history in U.S. social studies classes. In the following poem, a speaker describes flowers and weeds. The poem is also presented in the translated Spanish version. As you read, take notes on how the speaker describes flowers and weeds.*

### In English

[1] Let them be as flowers,  
always watered, fed, guarded, admired,  
but harnessed to a pot of dirt.

[5] I'd rather be a tall, ugly weed,  
clinging on cliffs, like an eagle  
wind-wavering above high, jagged rocks.

To have broken through the surface of stone,  
to live, to feel exposed to the madness  
of the vast, eternal sky.

[10] To be swayed by the breezes of an ancient sea,  
carrying my soul, my seed,  
beyond the mountains of time or into the abyss<sup>1</sup> of the bizarre.

[15] I'd rather be unseen, and if  
then shunned by everyone,  
than to be a pleasant-smelling flower,  
growing in clusters in the fertile valley,  
where they're praised, handled, and plucked  
by greedy, human hands.

[20] I'd rather smell of musty, green stench  
than of sweet, fragrant lilac.  
If I could stand alone, strong and free,  
I'd rather be a tall, ugly weed.



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### Spanish Translation

Déjenlas ser como flores

1. **Abyss** (*noun*): a seemingly deep or bottomless opening

rociadas, alimentadas,  
cuidadas, admiradas,  
pero presas en una maceta de tierra

Prefiero ser una hierba alta y fea  
adherido a los acantilados, como un águila  
mecido por el viento  
en las alturas de afiladas rocas.

Haber brotado  
por la superficie de la piedra  
para vivir, para sentirme expuesto  
a la locura del cielo tan vasto y eterno.

Ser sacudido por la brisa de un antiguo mar  
llevándose mi alma, mi semilla,  
más allá de las montañas del tiempo  
o hacía el abismo de lo extraño.

Prefiero no ser visto,  
o ser rechazado por todos  
antes que ser una flor perfumada  
creciendo entre montones en el fértil valle,  
donde las alaban, acarician y arrancan  
codiciosas manos del gentío.

Prefiero oler a moho verde y apestoso  
que a la dulce fragancia de la lila  
si me puedo parar solo, fuerte y libre

prefiero ser mala hierba, alta y fea.

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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 of the following identifies the theme of the poem?
  - A. People often fear those who choose not to conform to the majority.
  - B. It is much easier to be true to yourself than to conform to what others expect.
  - C. Being different can be isolating, but it leads to true independence and happiness.
  - D. People who must overcome difficult circumstances are often stronger.
  
2. PART B: Which detail from the poem best supports the answer to Part A?
  - A. "always watered, fed, guarded, admired" (Line 2)
  - B. "beyond the mountains of time or into the abyss of the bizarre." (Line 12)
  - C. "where they're praised, handled, and plucked" (Line 17)
  - D. "If I could stand alone, strong and free" (Line 21)
  
3. PART A: How does the poet's description of the weed contribute to the meaning of the poem?
  - A. It emphasizes the wild nature of the weed, which shows the thrill of uncontrolled freedom.
  - B. It portrays the weed as dangerous to the other flowers, which explains why the weed is isolated.
  - C. It portrays the weed as angry that it is unwanted, and this emphasizes the pain of isolation.
  - D. It presents the weed as quietly beautiful, and this challenges traditional ideas of beauty.
  
4. PART B: Which section from the poem best supports the answer to Part A?
  - A. "but harnessed to a pot of dirt." (Line 3)
  - B. "to live, to feel exposed to the madness" (Line 8)
  - C. "I'd rather be unseen" (Line 13)
  - D. "growing in clusters in the fertile valley" (Line 16)
  
5. How does the speaker's description of flowers develop the meaning of the poem?

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