**In Praise of Dreams** By: Wislawa Szymborska **/35** Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Biography**: Polish poet Wislawa Szymborska was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1996, for “poetry that with ironic precision allows the historical and biological context to come to light in fragments of human reality.” The judges call her “the Mozart of Poetry” for her ease with language and abundant inspiration. Though largely unknown outside of her native Poland before winning the Nobel, Szymborska has been writing for over half a century, and her work has been translated into English, German, Italian, Czech, Hebrew, French, Swedish, Spanish and Korean. Born in 1923 in Kurnik, Poland she published her first poem at the age of 22. Her early work embraced Socialist Realism, but by 1957 her ideas had begun to change, becoming critical of Stalinism. She turned to writing poetry about “everyday, ordinary things,” and later said her work was personal rather than political. She lives a reclusive existence in Cracow, Poland.

**Pre Reading: (5)**

1. List five things that you wish you could do well.
2. What are some common dreams you have? Do you dream a lot?
3. Complete this sentence – “In my wildest dreams I...”
4. What will this poem be about? Be sure to look at the title, and pictures.

**During Reading: (5)**

1. Annotate the poem. Look for any new literary devices.
2. Jot down any questions that occur to you as you read. Do you relate to anything? Is there something you do not understand?

**After Reading:**

**Comprehension: (5)**

1. Indicate three ways in which the poet shows the power of dreams.
2. Why does the poet feel happy that she can speak Greek with those who are not living?
3. What does the poet mean when she says that the way we ought to fly is on our own?
4. Why would it be an accomplishment to locate Atlantis?

**Style: (5)**

1. What is allusion? Highlight a few examples in the poem.
2. Why does the poet use allusion?
3. Examine the stanzas and line breaks. Why has the poet decided to write in a series of couplets?
4. How do the dreams range? How does this breadth contribute to the poem?

**Analysis (15)**

1. What is meant by the lines, “I am a child my own age/ but I don’t have to be?”
2. Write your own poem, “In Praise of Dreams,” in which you reveal your aspirations and hopes. Select appropriate fonts, pictures, and styles to display your poem effectively on a page. Make it no longer than a page, and have it between 20-30.

In Praise of Dreams By: Wislawa Szymborska

In my dreams

I paint like Vermeer van Delft.

I speak fluent Greek

and not just with the living.

I drive a car

that does what I want it to.

I am gifted

and write mighty epics.

I hear voices

as clearly as any venerable saint.

My brilliance as a pianist

would stun you.

I fly the way we ought to,

i.e., on my own

Falling from the roof,

I tumble gently to the grass.

I’ve got no problem

breathing under water.

I can’t complain:

I’ve been able to locate Atlantis.

It’s gratifying that I can always

wake up before dying.

As soon as war breaks out,

I roll over on my other side.

I’m a child of my age,

But I don’t have to be.

A few years ago

I saw two suns.

And the night before last a penguin,

clear as day.