Poetry Comprehension and Language Analysis

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Before the Rain

POEM

The street holds its breath beneath a white-hot sky;
A bicycle leans like a tired old horse.
Dust stitches the cracks in the pavement;
leaves turn their pale undersides to the light.
Far off, a cloud unrolls its grey sleeve.

The first drops tap the windows—
one, then three, then a hurried crowd.
Puddles wake, widening their silver eyes;
gutters whisper and hurry along.
A child lifts a face to the cool air,

and rooftops drum out a sudden song.
Then, as quickly as it came, the rain moves on.
Sunlight slips through the last loose thread of cloud;
the street shines, rinsed and new,
and the bicycle waits, bright as a bell.

QUESTIONS

Read the poem carefully. Answer in full sentences where appropriate.

1. In line 1, what does “holds its breath” suggest about the street or the weather? (2 marks)

2. What picture does the simile in line 2 create? Why might the poet describe the bicycle this way before the rain? (2 marks)

3. Explain the effect of the verb “stitches” in line 3. (2 marks)

4. How do the rhythm and sounds in lines 6–9 help you imagine the rain arriving? Use a word or phrase in your answer. (3 marks)

5. Find one example of personification in lines 8–11. What does it make you imagine? (2 marks)

6. How does the mood change from the opening to the final stanza? Support your answer with a phrase from each. (3 marks)

7. What does the dash at the end of line 6 make the reader expect? How does it affect the pace? (2 marks)

8. What does “rinsed and new” suggest about the effect of the rain? How does the final image reinforce this? (3 marks)