Teacher's Key

Dolly Parton: How One Singer Won Over a Divided America (Level B2)

Vocabulary Matching

1 impoverished = **N**
2 shrewd = **A**
3 publishing rights = **H**
4 royalties = **L**
5 endorsed = **G**
6 divisive = **M**
7 deflected = **I**
8 favorably = **E**
9 caregivers = **D**
10 literacy = **O**
11 conclusive = **J**
12 prompted = **K**
13 overstated = **B**
14 in lieu of = **C**
15 legacy = **F**

Fill in the Blank

1 impoverished
2 shrewd
3 publishing rights
4 royalties
5 endorsed
6 divisive
7 deflected
8 favorably
9 caregivers
10 literacy
11 conclusive
12 prompted
13 overstated
14 legacy

True or False

1 **True.** He ordered flags lowered across the country for a week.
2 **False.** The reading says she had not made the illness public.
3 **True.** She opened her own theme park, Dollywood, in 1986.
4 **False.** The recording never happened because Parton refused to give up half of the publishing rights.
5 **True.** Cyrus, her honorary goddaughter, has described her this way.
6 **False.** She turned it down twice.
7 **True.** 70 percent viewed her favorably and 5 percent unfavorably.
8 **False.** It runs in the US, Canada, the UK, Ireland, and Australia.
9 **True.** She gave the money in April 2020.
10 **False.** It said it would pay full tuition for employees in selected study programs.

Language Focus: Participle Clauses

Example answer: **Having grown up without money**, Parton understood how much a free book could mean to a child.

Comprehension Questions: Model Answers

1 She died in Nashville on August 25, 2026, at the age of 80. Her team said she died of cancer after a short illness, which she had not made public.

2 She was born in 1946 in a one-room cabin in the Great Smoky Mountains of East Tennessee, the fourth of twelve children in an impoverished farming family. She sang on local radio as a child.

3 Presley planned to record the song, but the day before the session his manager said he would do so only if he received half of the publishing rights. Parton cried all night and then refused, so the recording did not happen.

4 Because she kept the rights, she earned the royalties when Whitney Houston's 1992 version for The Bodyguard spent 14 weeks at number one in the United States.

5 She almost never endorsed candidates and usually deflected divisive questions with a joke. Open answer on why: a strong answer notes that avoiding party politics let people on the left and the right each see something they liked in her.

6 She wrote a song for Transamerica, a 2005 film about a transgender woman, and in 2020 she said publicly that Black lives matter.

7 The study surveyed over 86,000 caregivers in five countries and reported that enrolled children were read to more often and had stronger early literacy skills. Its main limit is that the data came from parents' own answers, not a controlled experiment, so it cannot prove cause.

8 Nearly 900 families who had lost their homes received $1,000 a month and then a final check, about $10,000 each in total.

9 Her fund was only one of several sponsors listed for early research on the Moderna vaccine, so saying she paid for the vaccine made her role seem bigger than it was.

10 False. Herschend said it would pay full tuition only for selected study programs.

11 No. The writer says the results are encouraging rather than conclusive, because they came from parents' answers, not a controlled experiment.

12 Best answer: to show at once how unusually broad her appeal was, and to set up the question in the last sentence of paragraph 1, which the rest of the reading tries to answer. Accept a reasoned answer about bipartisanship.

Notes on the Evidence

- Death and cause: Parton died on August 25, 2026, at Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center in Nashville; her estate and publicist Marcel Pariseau described a brief battle with cancer (WSMV, TODAY, NPR, August 25 to 27, 2026). She had not disclosed a diagnosis. Trump's one-week flag order and tributes from Obama, Bush, Clinton, Biden, and Harris: Fox News, Deadline, Rolling Stone, Hollywood Reporter. California's SB 931 (sponsors Shannon Grove, R, and John Laird, D), signed by Governor Newsom and reported by ABC News on September 22, 2026. Birthplace is given as Locust Ridge on her official site and as Pittman Center on Wikipedia; the reading avoids naming the town.
- Elvis Presley story: Parton's own accounts (CMT 2006; AXS TV interview reported by American Songwriter). Details such as "the day before the session" come from her; no independent record of the planned session was checked. Miley Cyrus: Parton became her honorary godmother in 1992; the "like a mother" description is from a 2024 W Magazine interview, reported after Parton's death.
- Poll: University of Massachusetts Lowell Center for Public Opinion with YouGov, national poll, March 2026: 70 percent favorable, 5 percent unfavorable, 19 percent no opinion, 6 percent never heard of her; next highest net rating was Barack Obama (50 percent favorable). Sample size was not checked in the topline. Medal of Freedom: she said she declined twice under Trump (husband's illness, then COVID-19 travel) and worried an offer under Biden would look political (San Francisco Chronicle).
- Imagination Library: founded 1995 in Sevier County in honor of her father, Robert Lee Parton, who could not read or write. Over 325 million books by June 2026 and over 3.5 million a month (dollyparton.com); WTVF reported over 332 million in late August. The Galea study (Macquarie University PhD thesis, 2025) used caregiver surveys at baseline, 6, and 12 months: 18,112 caregivers completed all three and were compared with 37,776 caregivers not yet receiving books. It is observational and self-reported, and it was promoted by the program and local United Way partners. Some press releases mislabel which group was the comparison group.
- Corrections to common claims: the My People Fund originally promised $1,000 a month for six months; in practice families received five monthly payments and a final $5,000 check, about $10,000 each (Dollywood Foundation release, May 2017). The COVID-19 gift (April 2020, $1 million to Vanderbilt University Medical Center) is listed as one sponsor in the preliminary Moderna report; headlines saying she "funded the vaccine" overstate it. The 2022 tuition benefit is Herschend's GROW U program with Guild Education; full coverage applies to selected programs, with up to $5,250 a year for others. Many headlines credited Parton personally. Whether the program still runs in 2026 was not checked.