

R 3.2

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Read the passage and answer the following question(s).

Thursday's Lesson

"Whatever you do, don't step on weird Mrs. Lundstrom's front yard."

That was the advice my big sister, Casey, gave me every morning before we left for school. I had heard this almost every day since I was in the first grade; because I always looked up to Casey, I never really questioned her. I didn't know why she called Mrs. Lundstrom "weird." Maybe it had something to do with the fact that her husband died a few years before. I didn't know why I was supposed to stay off that front yard. I just figured that something bad would happen if I trespassed on Mrs. Lundstrom's property, and that was all I needed to know... at least until one particular Thursday.

My best friend, Victor, met me in front of my house at eight o'clock sharp as he had done for the last two years. "Is Casey comin' with us today? Remember what we said. We're in fifth grade now. We can walk alone. Don't ya think?" asked Victor in a soft voice to keep Casey from hearing him.

We'd talked about this for weeks, but today we were finally going to do it.

"Yeah, let's get outta here before she comes out of the house," I said.

Victor and I literally ran down the street to get out of view. When we turned left onto Marcus Lane, we slowed down, thinking we were out of Casey's sight. As we approached the corner, I looked behind me and saw Casey heading in our direction. I looked to the left to see Mrs. Lundstrom's house laughing at us, as if daring us to walk on the yard.



Her house is located on the corner of Marcus Lane and Maple Avenue, the street our school is on. Running through her yard would allow us to cut across the corner, and this would save us time. Her front yard is forested with trees of all sizes and shapes that could hide us if Casey approached. This opportunity would provide the perfect getaway.

"Let's cut across Mrs. Lundstrom's lawn!" I yelled. "Casey's coming, and I just can't stand to listen to another one of her lectures about how I should walk with her to school. If we see her coming, we can hide behind one of those big trees, and Casey will walk right past us."

"Yeah, but this is weird Mrs. Lundstrom's yard and..." began Victor.

"Oh, quit worrying so much. You know Casey. She probably made up that whole thing to scare us."

Victor stood on the sidewalk, waiting for me to make the first move. It tickled me to see how timid he was, but he was never one to try something first. I took one step onto the lawn.

"Do you think Mrs. Lundstrom's mean or something? What if she sees us?" asked Victor.

"Oh, come on. Don't be silly. There are so many trees that we can hide behind. She'll never see us."

I spotted a huge evergreen that would hide me if need be, so I started sprinting in its direction. I suddenly heard a hissing sound coming from the ground. I stopped abruptly in fear of scaring a creature that might be lurking in one of the flower gardens. I looked toward Victor, and there was Casey standing behind him, panting. I was just about to say something when water started spraying all over me. The sprinklers had come on! Mrs. Lundstrom appeared on her front porch.

"Wait just a minute, young man." I could feel my heart thumping. "Let me turn these darn things off. My late husband set them to go off if an intruder came by. You don't appear to be an intruder. In fact, you don't look like you could harm a fly. I'm so sorry. Let me get a towel. Don't go away."

Casey had the broadest smile on her face. I could tell that she and Victor were about to start laughing.

"So this is the big reason to stay off of her yard? How did you know this, Casey? Did this ever happen to you? Huh? Huh?"

Casey just stood there with virtually no expression on her face. I could tell right then that she too had experienced an embarrassing spraying in Mrs. Lundstrom's yard.

(Questions 1-2)

1

Based on the passage, why does Victor hesitate to cut through Mrs. Lundstrom's yard?

- A** because Casey might catch them
- B** because of his memories of the stories told about Mrs. Lundstrom
- C** because Mrs. Lundstrom had a big dog
- D** because he did not want to get wet in Mrs. Lundstrom's sprinklers

2

What is the narrator's plan if Casey catches up with them?

- A** They will run around behind her so she cannot see them.
- B** They will hide behind trees until she passes by.
- C** They will give up walking on their own and start walking with her.
- D** They will hide behind Mrs. Lundstrom's house.

Read the passage and answer the following question(s).

The Kimono



Keiko was ashamed of the kimono. Aunt Fumika had presented it to her tonight after dinner. This visit from Aunt Fumika had been long awaited by the family. Keiko's parents had sacrificed much to arrange for Aunt Fumika's journey, and now Aunt Fumika would be here for six weeks. Now, the kimono from faraway Japan hung forlornly in the closet. It seemed to wonder if Keiko would ever wear it. Its intricate embroidery of red and pink floral design was embarrassing to Keiko. She was distressed by her inner rejection of something that represented her ethnic heritage.

The kimono was traditional. Its flowery brightness was perfectly suited for spring and summer. Summer vacation had just begun and her aunt was delighted to have given her special niece such an appropriate present. Now all of her niece's friends would know that Keiko's people came from Japan. The red and pink blossoms and green bamboo on her kimono were sure to bring her good fortune. Aunt Fumika had expressed these things that night at dinner, her ink-black eyes shining as Keiko had unfolded the kimono from its musty box.

Now Keiko lay in bed, agonizing. How would her friends react to seeing her in traditional Japanese dress instead of her usual California summer attire of a tank top, shorts, and sandals? Would her friends mock her or appreciate her ethnic pride? Each night for the next week, Keiko lay in bed staring at the moonlit patterns on the kimono in the closet. It seemed to reproach her.

Eight nights after Aunt Fumika's arrival, Keiko served a traditional Japanese dessert of *ohagi*. As the family savored the rich warmth of the sweet rice balls, Aunt Fumika began to talk of life in Japan. Aunt Fumika spoke perfect English, though accented. Keiko could understand every precise word. Keiko listened intently to the cadences of her aunt's sentences. They seemed to be swept along by a tide of emotion. In Aunt Fumika's voice, she could hear fierce pride, deep homesickness, and bittersweet nostalgia.

Keiko pictured the kimono in her closet, smothered behind a thick section of tank tops, sundresses, shorts, and swimsuits. Suddenly, the shame burning in Keiko's throat became painful.

Pushing away her plate of half-eaten *ohagi*, she jumped up and ran from the room, tears streaking her cheeks. She pounded up the stairs, ignoring her aunt's confused cries and her mother's worried questions. In her bedroom, she gently took the kimono from the closet, slipped it off its hanger, and pulled it on. Her tears of shame became tears of pride, the same pride she'd heard in Aunt Fumika's voice.

Smiling, she emerged from her bedroom, and walked triumphantly down the stairs into the dining room. Aunt Fumika stood with a gasp of pleasure and came toward her, arms outstretched.

"Beautiful, Keiko," she murmured, her voice catching as she clasped her niece to her in a warm embrace. In that moment, Keiko knew she had done exactly the right thing.

(Questions 3-4)

3

What is the climax or high point of the action in the story?

- A Keiko receiving the kimono from her aunt
- B Keiko lying awake looking at the kimono
- C Keiko eating sweet rice balls with the family
- D Keiko deciding to put on the kimono

4

According to the passage, what leads Keiko's tears of shame to turn into tears of pride?

- A** She thanked her aunt for such an appropriate gift.
- B** She served a traditional Japanese dessert of *ohagi*.
- C** She refused to put on the kimono.
- D** She finally put on the kimono.

Read the passage and answer the following question(s).

The Math Tunnel

This school year is moving along much better than last year. My parents sat me down and talked to me about some changes they had seen in me that were starting to worry them. A part of me felt defensive, and I started to argue with them. However, I also felt relieved after we talked because the results of our conversation changed my school year and how I feel about myself.

Mostly we discussed school grades. While my quarter and semester grades were fine, the grades for my individual assignments varied widely, from an A to an occasional F. I had no explanation for this except that some days I felt so overwhelmed by all the homework I was given that it made me want to stay in my room and not do anything. I added that I often wanted to run away from it all and hang out at the mall with my friends. In math, especially, it did not seem to matter if I studied hard or not; I usually earned no higher than a C minus on the tests.

It was pretty easy to get discouraged, but during our discussion, my mom suggested different strategies she believed would help me. Some of these strategies included making flashcards, taking time every night to review what I had learned that day, and writing down questions to ask the math teacher. She also insisted that I go to my math teacher's "After-School Tutoring Session" on Wednesdays. I tried this for a whole year; however, because this math teacher was the only teacher that offered tutoring, students from all the math teachers' classes attended. This meant there wasn't time to focus on the problems that I did not understand. Usually, the older students monopolized the teacher's time. I would leave the sessions as mystified and frustrated as when I went into the room.

This year, my parents contacted the math teacher and arranged for me to get individual tutoring. Since I've been getting this extra help, I'm not as stressed out. I still have a lot of homework to do, but I feel smart enough to tackle math. In addition, a flame inside me rekindled my desire to draw. Last year, I didn't do much in my drawing class; I know my art teacher and my parents were disappointed.

The efforts I have put into this year's work have taught me a lot about myself. My pride in myself is now stronger than my fear of failure once was. I submitted one of my art masterpieces into the school art contest. I like the drawing; I feel—no, I know—I did the best I could. I am starting to understand that I can take the same approach to math. I don't think I'll be the next Einstein, although it can still be my goal to know I have done the best I can.

(Questions 5-6)

5

Which of the following *best* describes the resolution of the story?

- A The author talks to his mother about school work.
- B The author believed in himself and understood that he can do well in school.
- C The author attended after-school tutoring sessions.
- D The author understood that he would not become the next Einstein.

6

Which episode in the story parallels the importance of the idea expressed in the last paragraph of the passage?

- A settling for a C minus in math
- B telling his mother why he does so poorly
- C trying to participate in the tutoring class
- D realizing that he is smart enough to complete his math work

Read the passage and answer the following question(s).

The Cottage

"In life, you can reject change or go with the flow, and you'll be content if you can learn to roll with it, Francisco," his grandmother had always advised.

"Easier said than done," Francisco muttered to himself as he stopped his bike with a gentle pat of his foot against the dirt path that led to the cottage.

He was stopping to sit back on the seat of his bike and just look at the cottage. He tried to look without seeing the "For Sale" sign that his father had just driven into the rose garden last night. Watching Pops drive the sign into the ground was like having a cold knife driven into his back. The prospect of leaving the cottage made Francisco feel like he'd been slapped down by a cold wave on a hot beach; this little house by the sea had been his home since he was two.

His family had moved to this seaside town twelve years ago when it had still just been a village. Now, developers were slowly encroaching on the town's limits. Francisco thought the developers were monsters, greedily devouring the wide stretches of unsoiled beaches and empty, grassy meadows. The thing that seemed so wrong to him was that they were only going to fill these beautiful, clean spaces with malls, grocery stores, gas stations, and fancy hotels. Why such destruction, and not even to give people homes? He knew that because he'd been listening furtively at his door as his parents and grandmother had talked late into the night. He should've been sleeping, but he had to know, had to listen to the plans, the reasons, to try to make some sense of this senseless farewell.

"I want to get out before the developers knock on the door," his mother had said, "and I don't want to be here when I see the bulldozers come into town."

There had been a note of despair in her voice, oddly mixed with a smile. She always smiled when she was worried about something. Francisco wished he could be as positive about the sale of the cottage. After a few minutes of just looking at the cottage, memorizing its smallness, its brown roof, white sides, red door, and brass knocker, he pedaled off toward the beach. He'd brought a bucket and spade with him. Digging on the beach had been a favorite pastime for all the years he'd been living at the cottage, for as far back as he could remember. His grandmother told him it was childish. He didn't care. It comforted him. The sea always gave him something from its depths. It wouldn't fail him today.

An hour later he'd found a brimming bucketful of treasures, including an enormous purple-gray conch that spoke in ocean waves to him every time he held it to his ear. The conch would go with him, he'd already decided. When they... left... yes, left the cottage behind forever, the conch would be his reminder of all those joyful, sun-filled days of his childhood by the sea.



(Questions 7-8)

7

Which statement correctly explains how conflict is still unresolved by the end of the story?

- A Francisco hasn't told his parents he can't sleep.
- B Francisco hasn't confronted his father for putting a "For Sale" sign on the property.
- C Francisco still hasn't been punished for going to the beach instead of going to school.
- D Francisco is still feeling unhappy about moving.

8

Which portion of the story is a subplot?

- A** Francisco's grandmother's advice
- B** the conversation Francisco overheard
- C** the developers takeover of the town
- D** Francisco's time on the beach

Read the passage and answer the following question(s).

Paper Route

Jameson decided that he despised his newspaper route and always would. It was piercingly cold that morning and a winter storm rumbled threateningly overhead.

"It's like I'm stuck in Dad's generation! Who delivers newspapers anymore, and why do I have to get up at four in the morning just because he says it builds character?!" he raged for the hundredth time that morning. He flung a paper, angrily, much too hard, and it glanced off Mrs. Lincolnshire's porch, striking one of her terra cotta planters. It shattered, scattering the rich, dark soil around a thriving miniature rosebush.

"Great," fumed Jameson sarcastically, "there goes part of my measly paycheck for this route."

"When I was your age, I had a paper route. It did me good, and besides, it gave me an appreciation for the miracles that happen in nature so early in the morning. Take a look around you between deliveries, Jameson, and you'll see what I mean," his father had advised just last night at dinner.

"Pass the green beans," Jameson had muttered back, with a surly expression.

It was five o'clock now and there was no miracle in sight. He sighed, wishing that he hadn't thrown that paper so hard and broken Mrs. Lincolnshire's pot. It would be like getting water from the moon, if she didn't hold him responsible for it.

Steering his bicycle into Larchmont Alley, the shortcut to the last street on his route, Jameson rubbed his sleepy eyes with one hand and yawned immensely. He'd give his right hand to be back in his warm bed right now, beneath the quiet comfort of his goose-down comforter. A small meow from a dark corner of the alley jerked him from his reverie. Stopping his bicycle, Jameson peered into the early morning gloom and watched as a greasy cardboard box shifted slightly in the corner. Suddenly curious, Jameson parked his bike and moved toward the box. Looking inside, he saw a scrawny, damp mother cat and a full litter of newborn kittens nestling blindly and anxiously beside her. She opened her mouth, her jaw shivering, and cried out to him piteously. Her eyes pleaded with him, and Jameson suddenly realized that he had just encountered his first paper route miracle.

"It's amazing you're alive," he murmured reassuringly at the mother cat, "but, I'll be back in a few minutes with milk and blankets for you and your kittens."

Bicycling home after delivering papers to the last street on his route, Jameson thought about the mother cat's plight. His heart filled with an odd mixture of shame, relief, and gratitude; he decided then that he would ask his parents if he could bring the cat family home with him later after he'd fed and blanketed them. He pedaled faster, realizing that he'd need to hurry before the storm broke. The mother cat, with her perseverance and sense of responsibility, had just taught Jameson an important lesson.

(Questions 9-10)

9

How is Jameson's internal conflict resolved in the story?

- A** Jameson finally realizes that he cares about mother cats and their kittens.
- B** Jameson discovers something miraculous on his paper route.
- C** Jameson decides to quit his paper route.
- D** Jameson understands that he has to pay for Mrs. Lincolnshire's broken pot.

10

What is the *main* source of conflict in the story?

- A** Jameson's dislike for green beans for dinner
- B** Jameson's unhappiness about his paper route
- C** the cat's lack of food and a home for her kittens
- D** Jameson's unwillingness to pay for the broken pot