



Name _____

Date _____

RAY'S SMIRK

Bob threw his backpack under the coat rack and headed into the classroom. He was late to school, again. He just hated being late, but his little brother always forgot something, dropped something, or forgot to brush his teeth.

"Go to the office and get a tardy slip," said Mr. Forest flatly.

Bob turned to leave. Suddenly, he noticed Ray coming out of the coatroom with a big smirk on his face. He wondered what he might be up to.

During the morning, Bob looked over at Ray. He was still wearing that silly smirk. He had to be up to something.

Lunchtime came and went. Mr. Forest rambled on about blizzards, flower blossoms, and Bob still wondered what Ray had up his sleeve.

As they left school, Ray gave Bob that same silly look, one more time. Bob said, "What?"

"You'll find out soon enough, late guy!"

When Bob got home, he reached into his backpack to get out his homework. His hand hit something soggy. He reached in again and then groaned. What was all over his backpack? Bob grabbed his flashlight and prepared for the worst.

"Yuck! My backpack is full of already chewed bubble gum! Yuck! Yuck! Yuck!"

STORY QUESTIONS

- Which word or words mean the same as *rambled*?
 - walked
 - talked on and on
 - stopped
 - woke up
- What trick did Ray play on Bob?
 - He told the teacher Bob cheated.
 - He put ants in Bob's lunch box.
 - He put gum in Bob's backpack.
 - He put candy in Bob's pocket.
- Why was Bob worried all day?
 - He didn't know what to do about coming to school late.
 - He didn't know why Ray was giving him funny looks.
 - He was hungry and wanted lunch.
 - He thought Mr. Forest would give him extra homework.
- What could be an **antonym** for *smirk*?
 - smile
 - grin
 - laugh
 - frown



Name _____ Date _____

MISSING KEY

"Don't forget to take the key to school with you today, Nolan. Remember it's the day I stay late at work."

"Okay, Dad," I said. "I will put it in a safe place."

Dad and I lived alone in a two-bedroom apartment. He had to work late on Wednesday nights, so I always had to let myself in and eat leftovers for dinner. Mrs. Robbins, the neighbor, always kept an eye on me so Dad didn't have to worry. She loved it if I came to visit, and she would even feed me snacks. Her kitchen always smelled of fresh cookies, so I didn't mind too much.

As I left for school, I placed the key in the usual spot, under the plant by the door. I then headed down the street to school.

Christian, the class bully, was waiting for me at the corner for the morning torture time. "Headed to school are you, daddy's boy?"

I just wanted to haul off and hit him, but Dad said violence never solved a thing. "Just keep walking," I told myself.

Christian taunted me for a few more minutes, and finally left me alone. It was useless to talk back. He would just keep being his regular bully self.

After school, I cut across the vacant lot so I would avoid getting tortured. Usually, it took about 10 minutes to get home. Today, it took five. My breathing was short, and I just wanted to get in the house. "Quick, get the key, and get in the house," I thought.

I reached for the key under the plant. It was gone . . .



STORY QUESTIONS

- Why did Nolan have to remember the house key?
 - so he could let himself in when Dad worked late
 - so he could go home any time during the day
 - so he could have friends over
 - so he could take his dad to lunch
- Nolan didn't mind visiting with Mrs. Robbins because . . .
 - she grew flowers and plants in her garden.
 - she wouldn't talk to him.
 - she wrote letters to her children.
 - she made him cookies.
- A **synonym** for the word *taunted* could be . . .

a. laughed.	c. smiled.
b. teased.	d. helped.
- Why didn't Nolan hit Christian?
 - He knew Christian could hurt him if he tried.
 - His dad told him violence never solves anything.
 - He didn't want to get in trouble at school.
 - He wanted to wait until he found a friend who could help him.



Name _____

Date _____

MOVING LIGHT

"Whatever are we looking for?" whispered my friend, Celine, as we sat by the window in my dark bedroom.

"It's a light that moves across the vacant lot whenever it is dark at night," I whispered back.

"How many times have you seen it?"

"Every night for the past three days. It usually starts about 10 o'clock and moves around for about 30 minutes."

"Do you think someone is trying to hide a dead body?"

"I don't know. It was giving me the willies. That's why I asked you to watch with me."

"Did you tell your parents?"

"No. I thought I would have you watch to make sure I wasn't imagining things before I told them."

We watched silently. At 10 P.M. sharp, a small light moved across the vacant lot. It bobbed and twisted. It stopped moving and then started again. We both gasped. A motor started making a loud angry sound. We began to shriek.

Suddenly, my mom arrived at our bedroom door. "Girls, are you okay?"

"We're not sure, Mom. There is a light that is moving in the vacant lot across the street."

Mom came over and watched. "It does look suspicious. Maybe we should call the police."

STORY QUESTIONS

- Which word do you think is **NOT** a synonym for *willies*?
 - chills
 - creeps
 - giggles
 - jitters
- Mom thought it would be best to . . .
 - huddle together and have a group hug.
 - go to the vacant lot and explore.
 - make hot chocolate and cookies.
 - call the police.
- Why was Celine staying overnight?
 - They were celebrating her birthday.
 - Her friend was scared to watch out her window alone.
 - They were going to the mountains in the morning to snowboard.
 - Celine was scared of the dark.
- If a lot is *vacant*, that means that it is . . .
 - empty.
 - full.
 - beautiful.
 - ugly.



Name _____ Date _____

ABANDONED BUS

“Hey, look at this!” my friend, Cindy, yelled. “It’s an abandoned bus.”

Frannie and I stopped and stared. We were speechless. Right in front of us, hidden in the thick bushes, was a bus—an old broken-down school bus.

“Let’s go inside,” Frannie said.

“No way! It isn’t ours. Besides, someone might be living in there.”

“That would be hard to believe,” whispered Cindy. “The trees are grown all around the bus. You can’t even see the windows.” We walked all around the bus, but the windows were boarded up or covered with thick branches from the trees. Moss was growing on the bumper, and the license plate was covered in mud.

Suddenly, we heard the crackling of twigs breaking as footsteps approached. We ducked, jumping behind a large oak tree. None of us dared to breathe.

A tall, thin man wearing a black trench coat and dark glasses was coming down the path. He had a magnifying glass in his hand, and he was carrying a briefcase. He had a thick mustache and bushy eyebrows.

Without warning, as if he had pressed a magic button, the door of the bus opened, and the man disappeared inside.

Cindy, Frannie, and I all looked at each other. We tiptoed around to the back of the bus and tried to peer in the windows.

“Give me a lift,” whispered Frannie softly.

As she looked in the window, she let out a low whistle. “Would you look at that!”



STORY QUESTIONS

- What do you think the girls were doing when they discovered the bus?
 - reading
 - exploring
 - writing stories
 - figuring out math problems
- Which of the following is a **synonym** for *crackling*?
 - blaring
 - hissing
 - crunching
 - booming
- Why was it difficult to see inside the bus?
 - The windows were closed and there were curtains that were shut.
 - It was guarded by a dog.
 - The windows were boarded up or covered with thick branches.
 - The windows had been painted over with black paint.
- Which of the following is **NOT** part of the description of the man in the passage?
 - He has a bright smile.
 - He was holding a magnifying glass.
 - He has bushy eyebrows.
 - He has a thick mustache.



Name _____ Date _____

CHOCOLATE SNAPSHOT

In the summertime, when things get boring, my friends Hank, Victor, and I often ride our bikes to the edge of town and go exploring.

Today started out as just a regular day. We had already swum in Victor's pool, played cards in Hank's garage, and shot off a rocket in my backyard.

"Let's head out to the edge of town," exclaimed Hank.

"If we pack a lunch, we can explore the hayloft at the old barn, dabble with fishing at the stream, or ride to the old broken-down castle that is way out of town."

"The castle!" Victor and I said in unison.

"I'll bring chocolate milk, celery, and cheese!"

"I've got the sodas, sandwiches, and chips!"

"I guess that means I bring the camera," said Hank.

Within ten minutes we were off, riding down the road on our bicycles at breakneck speed. We rounded the corner in front of the old castle so fast that the basket went flying off the front of Victor's bike.

"Great time for a snapshot!" yelled Hank.

We all laughed as he grabbed his camera.

The cheese, celery, and chocolate milk lay scattered on the ground in a big syrupy mess.

"Say cheese!" Victor and I smiled. "Who knows what adventures await us in the castle?"

STORY QUESTIONS

- Why did the boys want to go exploring?
 - They wanted to try out their new bikes.
 - They wanted to see the new town.
 - They were already bored.
 - They loved riding in the rain.
- The words "in unison" means . . .

a. together, at one time	c. in a group, with only one leader
b. separately, all alone	d. in groups of two or three
- Another way to say "breakneck speed" would be . . .

a. moving extremely slow.	c. moving to the beat.
b. moving extremely fast.	d. moving to another town.
- Which of the following is **NOT** an activity the boys had already done that day?

a. swimming in Victor's pool	c. shooting a rocket off in the backyard
b. playing cards in Hank's garage	d. riding their bikes to the movies



Name _____ Date _____

MISSING DOG

"Hey, Dad. Look at this." We were standing next to the mailboxes. A large sign was posted on them. It read: Missing Dog. Answers to the name of Ginger. Cocker spaniel, tan with markings. Collar around her neck. If found, call 868-2902.

"Doesn't that sound like the dog we saw running down the street this morning?"

"It surely does. Let's keep our eyes peeled as we drive home. We might see her again."

We looked and looked as we drove home, but there was no sign of Ginger. I begged Dad to drive around the neighborhood one more time.

"We just might see her, if we go around one more time."

"Okay," he said. "We have time, so let's give it a whirl."

I opened my window to call her name. "Ginger. Ginger. Here girl!"

Dad continued to drive down the street. Finding Ginger seemed impossible.

"Dad, watch out!" A tiny blue car with a pizza sign on top cut us off as we were about to turn left into our street. Right as we swerved to miss the car, I noticed a flash of tan and white in the car's mirror.

"Stop!" I wailed. I jumped out of the car and ran behind it.

Right there in the middle of the road was a little dog that looked just like the poster. She was whimpering, but I managed to pick her up. I struggled back to the car.

Dad and I drove back to the mailboxes and got the number to call. Dad let me dial it.

"Hello," a sad voice answered the phone.

"Hello," I said. "I think I have a surprise for you!"

STORY QUESTIONS

- Where did the boy find out about the missing dog?
 - from a sign on the mailboxes
 - from a billboard on the mailboxes
 - from a sign on the freeway
 - from an ad in the newspaper
- Which of these does not mean *impossible*?
 - without a solution
 - unworkable
 - achievable
 - not possible
- Which of the following is part of the description of the dog?
 - black with stripes
 - tan with markings
 - brown with spots
 - small with a long tail
- What do you think the boy and his dad will do next?
 - They will try to find the pizza driver.
 - They will return the dog to her owner.
 - They will keep the dog and name her Fluff.
 - They will take the dog to the vet.



Name _____ Date _____

CALLED FOR CHEATING

After the game was over, we all headed toward the locker room, cheering loudly. Our team had just won the first game of the football season, with the final score being 21–17.

Suddenly, I felt a push from behind. I turned around and saw it was the quarterback from the other team. He was glaring at me. “I’ve got a bone to pick with you!” he said.

My teammates and I felt instantly uncomfortable. They started to hurry to the locker room, leaving me alone with the bully from the other team.

“Hey!” he said. “I saw you trip my teammate and hold him back when the referee wasn’t watching.”

I just stood there. I didn’t deny it. I had tripped the guy, but it really wasn’t on purpose.

“Look,” I said. “I didn’t mean to. It just happened. When I turned around, he was right there, and I bumped into him. We both tripped. Don’t you remember?”

“Yeah, right!”

“I’m serious. It was an accident.”

Just at that moment, Coach Bentley stepped out the door of the locker room. “Brain!” he yelled. “Get yourself in here and get out of that uniform. We have some tape to watch, and you have to see it.”

The quarterback sneered at me and said, “I guess you get off this time, but I’ll be back.” He turned and walked toward the bus where the rest of his team was waiting. As I turned back and headed to the locker room I muttered, “Saved by the coach!”

STORY QUESTIONS

- Which of the following means the same as *sneer*?
 - sweet smile
 - funny grin
 - cruel smile
 - sad frown
- “I’ve got a bone to pick with you” means . . .
 - I want to talk to you.
 - I want to share a wishbone with you.
 - I want to look at a skeleton for Halloween.
 - I am choking on a chicken bone.
- What did the quarterback accuse the other player of doing?
 - scoring a touchdown illegally
 - making faces at the referee behind his back
 - purposely tripping a player from the other team
 - running out of bounds
- What nickname did the coach yell to the player?
 - Buddy
 - Bobby
 - Brian
 - Brain



Name _____ Date _____

A HAUNTED HOUSE?

The rain was pounding on the roof as I tried to sleep. It sounded like a downpour. We had just moved into our new house. It wasn't really new, but it seemed new to us. Our old house was too small since Mom had the baby, so we had bought a new house right up the street. Our address had changed from 123 Sycamore to 137 Sycamore.

The problem was that all the neighbors said the new house was haunted. All my friends teased me when they found out we were moving. I just let their words go in one ear and out the other.

Suddenly, I sat straight up in bed. Something was moving outside my window. Lying back down, my mind started to imagine things. Shadows moved across my wall, lightning flashed outside the window. Suddenly, a light shone on my window and my nightlight flickered and went out.

Several minutes later, a moaning sound came from outside my door. I jumped out of bed, put my feet into my warm, fuzzy slippers, and grabbed my baseball bat. Whatever it was, it was not going to frighten me again.

I reached for the door handle and started to open it.

"Boo!" yelled my big brother Alfred. He was standing in the hall with a long stick with a lantern on the end. He was wearing dark glasses and a long, black rain jacket.

"Did I scare you?" he asked.

I stood up to my full height. "No, of course not. I was just going to the kitchen to get a glass of water!" We both burst into fits of laughter and rolled on the carpet in the hallway of our new house.



STORY QUESTIONS

- "In one ear and out the other" is an idiom meaning . . .
 - not really pay attention to what's being said.
 - use a cotton swab to clean your ears.
 - put things in one ear and pull it out the other.
 - put something in and pull it out.
- Why did the kids at school tease the person telling the story?
 - They knew the previous owner, and he was creepy.
 - They were scared of the big windows in the new house.
 - They were jealous that their parents hadn't bought the house.
 - They said the new house was haunted.
- Why did the family move?
 - The old house was too big since one brother moved away.
 - The old house was too small since the grandparents came to live with them.
 - The old house was too small once the mom had another baby.
 - The old house was haunted.
- Who was behind the scary noises?

a. the father	c. the big brother
b. the big sister	d. the next-door neighbor



Name _____ Date _____

SECRET CODE

"This code is so hard," moaned Jacob. "Do you have the paper that tells me how to crack it?"

"I forgot where I put it," said Justin. "I didn't write it, you know."

"You didn't? Who did? I thought we were the only two who had this code," said Jacob.

"Don't know. Guess this adds to the mystery."

Justin and Jacob went in to the classroom. Justin checked his desk, his backpack, and in his cubby. The secret code was nowhere to be found. As he looked again, there was another note in his cubby, written in code.

"What! Who has our secret code? I think someone has stolen it from us."

"Hey, Justin, what are you looking for?" smirked Savannah as she sneaked up behind him. "It wouldn't be something secret, would it?"

Justin's head jerked up, and he looked her square in the eye. "What did you say?"

"I said, I was wondering if you lost something important. You seem frustrated and frantic. Am I right?"

"What's it to you?"

"Well, Samantha and I have been thinking. If you two let us in on your secret stuff, we might be able to help you find what you're missing."

Both boys looked at her. "Guess you two have our top secret information."

"We do," she sneered. "And if you want it back, you have to let us into your club."

The boys exchanged looks. What harm could it do?

STORY QUESTIONS

- What do you think is something the boys really like to do?
 - do math problems and compare answers
 - read mystery stories and talk about them
 - write in secret code
 - play pranks on the girls
- When Jacob wants to "crack" the code it means . . .
 - he wants to crack it open on the desk.
 - he wants to solve it.
 - he wants to open it using a nutcracker.
 - he wants to smash it.
- A **synonym** for *frustrated* could be . . .
 - irritated.
 - pleased.
 - happy.
 - excited.
- How did the girls get the boys' attention?
 - by telling the teacher about the code
 - by hiding in the classroom
 - by stealing their code
 - by talking to them at recess



Name _____ Date _____

LETTERS IN THE MAIL

"This year I'm turning over a new leaf," said Matilda. "From now on I am going to write to Grandma Beanie every week."

The first week, she wrote her letter and mailed it off. Matilda filled it with riddles and fun jokes. Grandma Beanie sent back a letter full of more riddles and jokes.

The second week, she sent Grandma Beanie a beautiful picture of the beach and a story she had written at school. Grandma Beanie sent her a picture of herself as a child on the beach and a story she had written.

Each week, Matilda tried to send different types of things to Grandma, and Grandma always sent back the same type of things.

One day, she asked, "Mom, what could I send Grandma Beanie that would be very unusual?"

"Why don't you send her a puzzle and your school picture this year?"

"What a great idea!" The week before Thanksgiving, Matilda sent Grandma Beanie a puzzle and a picture of herself at age 9. However, she did not realize that several pieces of the puzzle fell under her bed when she slipped it into the envelope. Matilda licked the envelope, sealed it, and stuffed it in the mailbox.

The next week, she got the surprise of her life. When she came home from school, there were three letters waiting for her. Each one was from Grandma Beanie. Each envelope had 10 puzzle pieces inside. None of them fit together into a complete puzzle.

"What's this all about?" she wondered. Matilda ran to the phone and called Grandma Beanie.

"My dear," said Grandma. "Some of the pieces are missing from my puzzle, so I decided to play a trick on you. Each day you get three envelopes. Each envelope has 10 pieces. At the end of 10 days, put the puzzle together and see what you have!"

STORY QUESTIONS

- What does it mean when Matilda uses the idiom "turning over a new leaf"?
 - She's going to the garden to collect leaves.
 - She's going to turn around and around many times.
 - She's going to make a fresh start and do better than before.
 - She is going to use leaves in a new art project.
- An **antonym** for *filled* could be . . .

a. crammed.	c. empty.
b. overflowing.	d. jam-packed.
- Why did the puzzle Grandma got in the mail have pieces missing?
 - Matilda was playing a joke on her grandmother.
 - Matilda had dropped some under her bed.
 - Matilda was getting even with her grandmother.
 - Matilda wanted her grandmother to guess what the other pieces were.
- What do you think will be on the puzzle when Matilda gets all of the pieces?

a. a picture of the ocean waves	c. a picture of Hawaii
b. a picture of Grandma when she was 9 years old	d. a picture of a dog and cat



Name _____ Date _____

SOCKS

"Roll out, girls!" yelled our camp counselor. "It's time to rise and shine."

All ten of us in the cabin moaned and pulled the sleeping bags over our heads. "Just let us sleep for 10 more minutes. PLEASE!"

"No way. Time to get up and clean this cabin. Today is the day for the big sock race, and we are going to win!" Avery, Jenna, and Kelly rolled off their bunks. Thud! I rolled off the top bunk and hit the floor. "Help! I'm being attacked by a giant sock!"

"I think you mean a sleeping bag!" laughed Kelly.

We ran outside and gathered under the flagpole.

"Today is the big day," stated the head counselor. "It is the day for the longest sock race. When I blow the whistle, each counselor will come and pick up a bag. Each team will have socks in the bag. Tie all the socks together until the timer goes off. The team with the longest string of socks wins!"

"We're gonna win! We're gonna win!" we all screamed at once.

The whistle blew, and our counselor ran to get a sack of socks. She picked a blue travel bag and ran back to our line.

"Quickly!" she screamed. "Get the socks out and start tying!"

Avery opened the bag. Somberly, she said, "There's a note. It says, 'Dear counselor, we ran out of socks. If you want to win, solve the problem on your own!'"

"Oh, my gosh!"

"Oh, no!"

"Back to the cabin for socks!" we yelled, and off we galloped.

STORY QUESTIONS

- How can the campers win the race?
 - by creating the longest chain of socks
 - by taping socks to the trees
 - by collecting dirty socks in the biggest pile
 - by putting the socks in the largest washer
- When the girls "galloped" off to the cabin, it means . . .

a. galloped like horses.	c. ran very fast.
b. jumped on horses and rode them to the cabin.	d. skipped.
- The campers are going to solve the problem of the empty bag by . . .
 - using their own socks.
 - stealing socks from other cabins.
 - calling their parents to bring them fresh socks from home.
 - running to the store and buying more socks.
- What would be a good ending for this story?
 - Even though they had an empty bag, the girls filled it with dirty laundry.
 - Even though their counselor was kind, the girls never finished before the bell.
 - Even though the socks were dirty, they were still able to get them clean.
 - Even though they had sock problems, the girls were able to win the contest of the socks.



Name _____ Date _____

CYCLONE IN THE HOUSE

This past week I went to stay with my grandma and grandpa. I always go there for a week in the summer. They live on a farm. There isn't much time for television at their farm, but I don't care because we have so much to do. I get to help Grandpa milk the cows, and help Grandma collect eggs from the chickens. She shows me how to steal the eggs carefully when the hens aren't looking. Grandpa teaches me not to mistake melons for onions in the garden and how to dig for carrots and radishes.

When I got home from the farm, I was ready to plop down on my bed and take a long rest. I was ready to watch movies, chat with friends, and play video games with my sister.

Grandpa brought me home and dropped me off outside the door. He had waved goodbye and drove off without coming in. He was running late for his dentist appointment. When I walked in the house, it looked like a cyclone had hit it. Towels were hanging on the backs of chairs, juice was all over the kitchen table, and mud was caked on the floor. I wrinkled my nose in disgust. Where was my mom? What had happened to our house?

I walked down the hall in a daze. Mom had made sure when I left for Grandma's and Grandpa's that I left my room neat as a pin. Opening the door to my room, I gasped in horror. Dirty socks were on the floor. The books were all out of the bookshelf. Broken toys littered the room. What was going on?

I shut my eyes tight. I tried to collect my thoughts. When I opened them, I scanned the room again, then glanced up and down the hallway. I knew what was wrong.

Sprinting for the door with my duffel bag in my hand, I ran out the front door. All the houses on our street look the same. I was in the neighbor's house!

STORY QUESTIONS

- Which of these didn't the person in the story do at Grandma's?

a. milk cows	c. dig for carrots
b. cook omelets	d. collect eggs
- This passage is written in . . .

a. third person.	c. first person.
b. second person.	d. fourth person.
- Which word is a **synonym** you could use for the word *disgust* in the passage?

a. loathing	c. enjoyment
b. entertainment	d. happiness
- What mistake did Grandpa make?
 - He dropped his grandchild off at the wrong house.
 - He went to the wrong dentist.
 - He forgot to brush his teeth first thing in the morning.
 - He was driving the wrong car.