**Directions** Read the following selection.

**The Bundle of Sticks**

Many years ago a man named Spiros lived on an island in Greece with his wife and their two grown sons. The family raised goats and grew olives in a lush grove behind their house. Spiros was also a cabinetmaker, a skill he was teaching his sons. Life was good for the family—or it would have been, except for one problem: the sons could not get along with each other. Over the years Spiros tried everything. He scolded, punished, and pleaded with them, but nothing worked. Their quarrels raged on.

As young children the boys competed for toys, friends, and their parent's affections. Even when they grew older, they couldn't seem to agree on anything. The household was in constant turmoil as fights erupted at a moment's notice over issues large and small: whether the harvest would be good this year, who was better looking, or whose turn it was to milk the goats.

**10**One day, Spiros received a letter from Uncle Vasilios, the oldest and most esteemed uncle in the family. It was Spiros's turn to receive a visit from the valued family elder. Spiros readily agreed and then began thinking about what they would need in order to make a good impression on their houseguest. They had plenty of room for him, but he would need some place to store his clothes. A new cabinet with large drawers would be perfect, and Spiros wanted his sons to build it. He gave them a deadline of one month.

The trouble began immediately. How many drawers should the cabinet have? Who would cut the wood? What color should the piece be stained? Spiros stood by helplessly, watching his sons waste time in endless bickering. At one point, the combatants became so enraged that they began **20** breaking up the wood they were supposed to use for the project.

That was the last straw for Spiros. Infuriated by their behavior, he decided to teach them a lesson. He **20**gathered up some twigs from nearby trees and tied them together into a tight bundle. He called his sons over and handed the bundle to the older one, ordering him to break it in half. The elder son tried until he was red-faced with exertion and finally gave up. The younger brother jeered at his weakness and then took his turn. But he could not break the bundle either,

no matter how hard he tried.

After their futile attempts, Spiros untied the bundle and gave each son one stick. "Now try again," he told them. When they did, each stick broke easily with a sharp snap.

"There is a lesson for you in these sticks," Spiros said. "When you work together, no one can

defeat you, but when you quarrel and go your separate ways, you become weak and vulnerable. There is strength in unity."

**30** The sons were embarrassed by their behavior. They shook hands and began to work together on the cabinet. They agreed upon a design, helped each other measure and cut the wood, and took turns hammering the pieces in place. Within a week—well ahead of schedule—they had produced a cabinet well-made and handsome enough to please their uncle and make their father proud.

“Bundle of Sticks” by Aesop, retold by Dale W. Pepin. Copyright © Dale W. Pepin. Used by permission of the author.

**Comprehension**

**Directions**

Answer the following questions about “The Bundle of Sticks.”

\_\_\_\_\_1. Which words *best* describe the change in the brothers?

1. resistant – approving
2. ridiculous - intelligent
3. unfortunate - lucky
4. anxious - careful

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. You can tell this story is told in the third-person point of view because the

a. narrator uses the words *I* and *me*

b. writer includes personal opinions

c. narrator is not a character in the story

d. writer describes the narrator’s feelings

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. In which part of the plot do the sons start to argue?

a. rising action

b. climax

c. falling action

d. resolution

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. Who is the protagonist in this story?

a. mother

b. father

c. uncle

d. son

\_\_\_\_\_ 5. What inference can you make about the father?

a. He was wealthy.

b. He would retire soon.

c. He favored the older son.

d. He was wise and resourceful.

\_\_\_\_\_ 6. What event motivated the brothers to make up?

a. The goats needed attention from everyone.

b. The cabinet deadline was quickly approaching.

c. The bundle became easy when broken together.

d. The father continued to plead with both his kids.

\_\_\_\_\_ 7. The story’s theme is revealed when the brothers

a. try to break the bundle of sticks.

b. quarrel about who is better looking.

c. put aside their differences and work as a team.

d. become so angry that they break up the wood for the cabinet.

\_\_\_\_\_ 8. In which part of the plot do the sons become ashamed of their actions?

a. exposition

b. climax

c. falling action

d. resolution

**Directions**

Use context clues and your knowledge of root words to answer the following questions. The line numbers will help you find the words in “The Bundle of Sticks.”

\_\_\_\_\_ 9. What is the most likely meaning of the word “impression” in line 12?

1. brief sense
2. lasting feeling
3. lifelong dream
4. temporary thought

***from* Little by Little**

**Jean Little**

I looked up from my grade five reader and smiled. I liked Miss Marr a lot. And, even though we had only met an hour ago, I thought she liked me, too.

She was young and pretty and she had a gentle voice. But that was not all. Like Mr. Johnston, she had polio. As I listened to her passing out books behind me, I could hear her limping, first a quick step, then a slow one. The sound made me feel a little less lonely. My teacher would understand how it

felt to be the only cross-eyed girl in Victory School.

“This is your desk, Jean,” she had said.

It sat, all by itself, right up against the front blackboard. I was supposed to be able to see better there. I had not yet managed to make anyone understand that if I wanted to read what was written on the board, I **10** would have to stand up so that my face was only inches away from the writing. Then I would have to walk back and forth, following the words not only with my eyes but with my entire body. If the writing were up at the top of the board, I would have to stand on tiptoe or even climb on a chair to be able to decipher it. If it were near the bottom, I would have to crouch down.

I remembered Miss Bogart printing large, thick, yellow letters on a green chalkboard. That had been so different. These dusty grey boards looked almost the same color as the thin, white scratches Miss Marr's chalk made. **H**er small, neat words were composed of letters that flowed into each other,

too, which made reading them even harder.

I would not explain. How could I? She might make me climb and crouch to read the words.

**20** I stood out far too much as it was. All the desks except mine were nailed to the floor in five straight rows. The seats flipped up when you slid out of them. They were attached to the desk behind. On top was a trough for your pencil and, in the right-hand corner, an inkwell which Miss Marr kept filled from a big ink bottle with a long spout. All the desk lids were a dark wine color.

My desk was new and varnished a shiny golden brown. It had been provided for me because, in theory, it could be moved to wherever I could see best. It was, however, far too heavy and unwieldy for Miss Marr or me to shift. All that special desk did was single me out even more.

I turned sideways in my new desk so that I could watch Miss Marr and caught sight of Shirley Russell instead. If only she would notice me!

Shirley had about her the magic of a story. She and her brother Ian had come from England to stay with

**30** their aunt and uncle and be safe from the bombing. She had joined our class near the end of grade four. Shirley had a lovely voice, with an accent like the child movie actress Margaret O'Brien's. She also had golden ringlets, longer and fairer than Shirley Temple's. She was a War Guest. She was different, too, but everybody wanted to be her friend.

“Face front, Jean,” Miss Marr said. “Here are your spelling words.”

She had typed them for me on a big print typewriter. I bent over them, drawing each letter on the roof of my mouth with the tip of my tongue. I had discovered that this helped me to remember them. It also helped fill in time.

When the bell rang for recess, Miss Marr astonished me by saying to Shirley Russell, “This is Jean Little, Shirley. She can't see well. Would you be her friend and help her get into the right line when it's time to

**40** come back inside?”

Shirley smiled sweetly and nodded her golden head. I could not believe this was really happening. Shirley Russell was actually going to be my friend. At last I was going to have a girl to do things with, and not just any girl. The War Guest herself!

We marched down the stairs and went out into the girls' side of the playground. I turned to Shirley, my

smile shy, my heart singing.

Shirley scowled. Just under her breath, so that nobody but me could hear, she snarled, “You keep away from me. Get lost!”

Then she turned and ran.

“Be my partner, Shirley, and I'll give you my Crackerjack prize,” I heard one girl call out.

**50** There was a hubbub of offered bribes and vows of eternal friendship. Nobody looked in my direction.

I stood where I was, stunned into immobility. I should have guessed, perhaps, that our teacher had asked the impossible of the English girl. She was popular at the moment, but if she had me trailing after her, her accent might suddenly cease to be interesting and just be weird. She was a foreigner, after all, and she knew it.

Before any of them had time to notice me watching them, I walked away to the far side of the playground. I leaned up against a tall tree and stared off into the distance, as though I had my mind on things other than silly grade five girls. To keep myself from crying, I began talking to the tree that was

supporting me.

“Are you lonely, too, tree?” I murmured. “If you are, I'll come every day and talk to you. We could be

**60** friends.”

As I drew a shaking breath, much like a sob, I heard a gentle rustle above my head. I glanced up. The leafy branches seemed to nod to me.

You can count on a tree, I told myself. A tree is better than a person. But I knew it was not true.

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**Comprehension**

**Directions:** Answer the following questions about the excerpt from *Little by Little*.

\_\_\_\_\_ 10. Based on the details in lines 34-40, which inference can you *best* make?

1. Jean loves drawing letters.
2. Miss Marr tries to find ways to help Jean.
3. Shirley is always willing to help people.
4. Miss Marr types the spelling words for the class.

\_\_\_\_\_ 11. Jean experiences a conflict when

1. she draws each letter on the roof of her mouth
2. the tall tree does not provide an answer to her question
3. Miss Marr gives her a large-print list of her spelling words
4. Shirley refuses to be her friend and help her during recess

\_\_\_\_\_ 12. What word *best* describes Jean?

1. afraid
2. unpopular
3. independent
4. determined

\_\_\_\_\_ 13. Jean’s conflict with her disability is an example of

1. man vs. man
2. man vs. self
3. man vs. society
4. man vs. nature

\_\_\_\_\_ 14. The antagonist in *Little by Little* is

1. Mr. Johnson
2. Miss Marr
3. Shirley
4. Jean

\_\_\_\_\_ 15. The best summary for Little by Little is

1. Jean is a girl who is worried about others’ opinions of her.
2. A fifth grader enters Victory School and cannot make friends.
3. Jean is a young girl who is determined to have friends at any cost.
4. A young girl finds it hard to overcome her isolation due to her disability.

\_\_\_\_\_ 16. Which statement best compares the character Miss Marr, from *Little by Little*, to Spiros, in *The Bundle of Sticks*?

1. They are both concerned parents.
2. They need acceptance from others.
3. They know the importance in learning a trade.
4. The promote cooperation and working together.

**Directions**

Use context clues and your knowledge of compound words to answer the following questions. The line numbers will help you find the words in “Little by Little.”

17. What is the best definition of the word “inkwell” in line 22?

1. a container that holds ink
2. a bottle that holds the pencil
3. a place to practice writing
4. a tray for painting ink

**Directions**

Answer the following question on a separate sheet of paper.

18*. Little by Little* is written in first person point of view. Explain how this choice impacts the reader? Use information from the story in your explanation.