Grade 8, Unit 7

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| --- | --- |
| Focus | Questions |
| Plot | 1, 2, 4, 9, 10, 11 |
| Theme | 3, 5 |
| Conflict | 6 |
| Universal Ideas | Not tested- new concept |

Generalization: 7, 8

1. D

2. D

3. A

4. A

5. C

6. C

7. D

8. B

9. B

10. CR

11. B

**10. How does the incident where the boy lies in court affect the outcome of the story? Use information from the story to explain your answer.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Score** | **Description** |
| 2 | The response is an adequate explanation and shows *satisfactory* understanding of how the boy’s lie affected the outcome of the story, supported with *relevant* information from the essay. |
| 1 | The response is a partial explanation and shows *minimal* understanding of how the boy’s lie affected the outcome of the story, supported with somewhat *general references* from the essay. |
| 0 | The response is totally incorrect or irrelevant. |

Sample response:

They boy’s lie helped him win his case. By lying about where the fly was, the boy caused the rich man to explain the actual location of the fly. This information then told the court that the rich man did make the promise and knew of a fly being the witness.

**Grade 8, Unit 7**

**Directions**

Read the following selection. Then answer the questions that follow.

**The Fly**

**edited by Jane Yolen**

Everyone in the village knew the usurer, a rich and smart man. Having accumulated a fortune over the years, he settled down to a life of leisure in his big house surrounded by an immense garden and guarded by a pack of ferocious dogs. But still unsatisfied with what he had acquired, the man went on making money by lending it to people all over the county at exorbitant rates. The usurer reigned supreme in the area, for numerous were those who were in debt to him.

One day, the rich man set out for the house of one of his peasants. Despite repeated reminders, the poor laborer just could not manage to pay off his longstanding debt. Working himself to a shadow, the peasant barely succeeded in making ends meet. The moneylender was therefore determined that if he could not get his money back this time, he would proceed to confiscate some of his debtor's most valuable

**10** belongings. But the rich man found no one at the peasant's house but a small boy of eight or

 nine playing alone in the dirt yard.

“Child, are your parents home?” the rich man asked.

“No, sir,” the boy replied, then went on playing with his sticks and stones, paying no attention whatever to the man.

“Then, where are they?” the rich man asked, somewhat irritated, but the little boy went on playing and did not answer.

When the rich man repeated his query, the boy looked up and answered, with deliberate slowness, “Well, sir, my father has gone to cut living trees and plant dead ones and my mother is at the marketplace selling the wind and buying the moon.”

**20** “What? What in heaven are you talking about?” the rich man commanded. “Quick, tell me where they are, or you will see what this stick can do to you!” The bamboo walking stick in the big man's hand looked indeed menacing.

After repeated questioning, however, the boy only gave the same reply. Exasperated, the rich man told him, “All right, little devil, listen to me! I came here today to take the money your parents owe me. But if you tell me where they really are and what they are doing, I will forget all about the debt. Is that

clear to you?”

“Oh, sir, why are you joking with a poor little boy? Do you expect me to believe what you are saying?” For the first time the boy looked interested.

“Well, there is heaven and there is earth to witness my promise,” the rich man said, pointing up to the sky **30** and down to the ground.

But the boy only laughed. "Sir, heaven and earth cannot talk and therefore cannot testify. I want some living thing to be our witness.”

Catching sight of a fly alighting on a bamboo pole nearby, and laughing inside because he was fooling the boy, the rich man proposed, “There is a fly.

He can be our witness. Now, hurry and tell me what you mean when you say that your father is out cutting living trees and planting dead ones, while your mother is at the market selling the wind and buying the moon.”

Looking at the fly on the pole, the boy said, "A fly is a good enough witness for me. Well, here it is, sir. My father has simply gone to cut down bamboos and make a fence with them for a man near the river.

**40** And my mother . . . oh, sir, you'll keep your promise, won't you? You will free my parents of all

their debts? You really mean it?”

“Yes, yes, I do solemnly swear in front of this fly here.” The rich man urged the boy to go on.

“Well, my mother, she has gone to the market to sell fans so she can buy oil for our lamps. Isn't that what you would call selling the wind to buy the moon?”

Shaking his head, the rich man had to admit inwardly that the boy was a clever one. However, he thought, the little genius still had much to learn, believing as he did that a fly could be a witness for anybody. Bidding the boy goodbye, the man told him that he would soon return to make good his

promise.

A few days had passed when the moneylender returned. This time he found the poor peasant couple at

**50** home, for it was late in the evening. A nasty scene ensued, the rich man claiming his money and the

poor peasant apologizing and begging for another delay. Their argument awakened the little boy, who

ran to his father and told him, “Father, Father, you don't have to pay your debt. This gentleman here has promised me that he would forget all about the money you owe him.”

“Nonsense!' The rich man shook his walking stick at both father and son. “Nonsense! Are you going to stand there and listen to a child's inventions? I never spoke a word to this boy. Now, tell me, are you going to pay or are you not?”

The whole affair ended by being brought before the mandarin who governed the county. Not knowing what to believe, all the poor peasant and his wife could do was to bring their son with them when they went to court. The little boy's insistence about the rich man's promise was their only encouragement.

**60** The mandarin began by asking the boy to relate exactly what had happened between himself and the moneylender. Happily, the boy hastened to tell about the explanations he gave the rich man in exchange for the debt.

“Well,” the mandarin said to the boy, “if this man here has indeed made such a promise, we have only your word for it. How do we know that you have not invented the whole story yourself? In a case such as this, you need a witness to confirm it, and you have none.” The boy remained calm and declared that naturally there was a witness to their conversation.

“Who is that, child?” the mandarin asked.

“A fly, Your Honor.”

“A fly? What do you mean, a fly? Watch out, young man, fantasies are not to be tolerated in this place!” **70** The mandarin's benevolent face suddenly became stern.

“Yes, Your Honor, a fly. A fly which was alighting on this gentleman's nose!” The boy leaped from his seat.

“Insolent little devil, that's a pack of lies!” The rich man roared indignantly, his face like a ripe tomato. "The fly was *not* on my nose; *he was on the housepole* . . .” But he stopped dead. It was, however, too late.

The majestic mandarin himself could not help bursting out laughing. Then the audience burst out laughing. The boy's parents too, although timidly, laughed. And the boy, and the rich man himself, also laughed. With one hand on his stomach, the mandarin waved the other hand toward the rich man:

“Now, now, that's all settled. You have indeed made your promises, dear sir, to the child. *Housepole or* **80** *no housepole, your conversation did happen after all!* The court says you must keep your promise.”

And still chuckling, he dismissed all parties.

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1. From the rich man’s actions and beliefs in lines 45 - 48, you can infer that he
2. worries about getting his money.
3. thinks that the boy is a good son.
4. plans on sharing the story with friends.
5. believes that he is smarter than the boy.
6. What can you infer from the fact that the rich man “stopped dead” in line 74?
7. The fly had returned.
8. The boy had been caught in a lie.
9. The mandarin was staring angrily.
10. The rich man realized he had been caught.
11. What is the theme of the story?
12. The truth will catch up with you.
13. You can always count on people.
14. You must fight for the less fortunate.
15. The love of family is most important.
16. Lines 54 and 55, “Nonsense! Are you going to stand there and listen to a child’s inventions? I never spoke a word to this boy.” help to propel the action by —
17. forcing an outsider to solve the dispute.
18. making the parents go seek help for their son.
19. pushing the parents to give in and pay the debt.
20. causing the rich man to stop asking for the money.
21. What is the best summary of this story?
22. A town watched as a rich man lost his money due to a family’s close relationship.
23. A day in court ended with a boy using a fly as his only witness in a case over money.
24. A rich man came to get his money but got frustrated when a young boy ruined his day.
25. A boy uses his quick wit to outsmart a rich lender that was looking to collect his money.
26. The best evidence of man vs. man conflict can be seen when —
27. the boy told his father not to pay his debt.
28. the parents were concerned about the boy’s witness.
29. the rich man fails to follow through on a promise to the boy.
30. the mandarin told the boy that fantasies would not to be tolerated.
31. What generalization can you make about the mandarins of that time?
32. They most often have the best sense of humor.
33. They always rule for the underdogs in the case.
34. They are likely older, unhappy people who most others fear.
35. They are usually the people who have the final say in the land.
36. What generalization can you make about people who lend money after reading this story?
37. They are angry.
38. They are greedy.
39. They are intelligent.
40. They are trustworthy.
41. A subplot in this story would most likely occur if —
42. The little boy failed to be so intelligent.
43. The rich man had a dispute with another family.
44. The parents decided to just pay the money back.
45. The court case was lengthened due to lack of evidence.
46. How does the incident where the boy lies in court affect the outcome of the story? Use information from the story to explain your answer.
47. Which of the following lines foreshadows that an issue will be handled in court?
48. “Quick, tell me where they are…” (lines 20 – 21)
49. “I want some living thing to be our witness.” (lines 31 – 32)
50. “Do you expect me to believe what you are saying?” (line 27)
51. The bamboo walking stick in the big man’s hand looked... (lines 21 – 22)