Cabin in the Woods

by ReadWorks

"Hurry!" Jessica called back as Felicia pulled the knot tight on one of her shoes. Felicia had carefully double-knotted them before they started walking, but the laces had come undone, as if of their own volition. They always did that. It seemed she couldn't go an hour without having to retie them, and yet she tied them just the same as everyone else.

"Coming! Is the sky falling? Jeez!"

Jessica was Felicia's best friend, but she could be incredibly bossy. Felicia was trying to take her mom's advice and "calmly assert herself," but wasn't so sure she had a handle on the calm part just yet.

They turned off the street and started up the narrow path into the woods. Felicia felt herself relax instantly as she breathed in the fresh air and looked at the blanket of leaves overhead. This was her favorite time of year, when the leaves turned to tones of crimson, yellow, and orange.

The leaves crunched beneath her feet, and the birds sang their happy songs. The squirrels, chipmunks, and who knows what else zigzagged their way through the forest. The path wound to the right until they came to the river, which followed it to the left, wandering upstream along the dirt.

"Long or short?" Jessica asked when they came to a fork in the path. Left was the longer loop; right was the shorter one.

"Hmmm... I choose left," said Felicia. It was crisp and sunny outside, the kind of day where the longer she stayed out, the better. Plus, heading home would mean heading back to the science report that had been sitting all weekend on her desk.

The girls walked in silence for a few minutes, and then they started singing their usual mash-up: a little bit of *Grease*, a little bit of Disney, and a little bit of the latest trending pop star. They were right in the middle of "Under the Sea" when Jessica stopped singing, leaving Felicia all on her own to belt out, "Life is the bubbles!"

"Check it out, Leesh," said Jessica, pointing at the bushes beside them.

"Check what out?"

"Look! Right past those bushes!"

The girls had been certain they knew every inch of the woods, yet neither of them had ever noticed this path before. There was no clear route to get to it from where they were, but only ten feet of bushes stood between them and the new path.

"Well, we can't just let it go unexplored. Let's see where it leads," Felicia said, scanning the bushes for the least intimidating way through.

"How about here?" Jessica called up from the ground, where she lay on her belly. "If we crawl, it's

 · © 2015 ReadWorks®, Inc. All rights reserved.

almost like a little tunnel."

Felicia crouched down and peered into the brush. "Whoa! It's like a beaver tunnel or something, but in the bushes. Let's do it."

Felicia felt the tingle of adventure on her spine. It was the same tingle she felt when she jumped off the high diving board in swim class or neared the top of a giant rollercoaster drop.

They crawled their way through the tunnel, the bushes grazing their backs. When they made it through to the other side, Felicia stood up and brushed off her arms and legs. She smiled at Jessica, who giggled in return.

"Here you go, Mother Nature," said Jessica, pulling a big twig and a handful of leaves out of Felicia's long, curly hair.

The path dipped down a little hill and into a grove of pine trees. A flash of yellow stood out from the clearing behind the pines.

"A house all the way out here? Let's go!" Felicia said, the tingle rising.

Their pace quickened from walking to jogging to full-on sprinting. Up close, Felicia saw that the house was a cabin. The cabin's walls, which she imagined were once a bright, sunny yellow, looked dull and stained. A crumbling chimney peeked out from the roof. Chips in the door's green paint revealed dark wood beneath. The windows were grimy, their corners covered in cobwebs.

"This has to be it, Leesh," Jessica whispered, her eyes widening with excitement and concern.

"Be what?"

"The cabin Joey told us about over the summer. Don't you remember?"

Felicia had pushed it to the back of her mind, but now she remembered. Jessica's brother Joey was full of stories, mostly the kind you didn't want to hear because they'd keep you up all night, worrying they'd make their way into your dreams.

They walked up to a cabin window and peered through the window, shoulder to shoulder. Inside, a rocking chair sat in front of a wood-burning stove with a tall pot on it. Cartons, bottles, and pieces of paper covered a table and a chair beside it. There was a sack draped over the back of the chair. Below their noses was a twin mattress, and a large trunk sat across the room from the window.

Felicia's elbows and knees began to ache. Her stomach felt heavy, and her throat filled with fear. "What do you think is in the trunk?"

"Let's find out. Come on. Joey showed me how to pick a lock with my bobby pin if we ever needed to."

They didn't need to. The door wasn't locked, and it opened with a simple twist of the knob. Felicia stood, stuck in the doorway until Jessica grabbed her hand and tugged her forward. They stared at the trunk, both wondering what could be inside. Jessica knelt beside it and lifted the heavy top. It was filled to the brim with yellowing copies of the *Tintown Gazette.*

"They're all the same," Felicia noted, flipping through a stack. Each one was from 1964, and the cover

ReadWorks.org · © 2015 ReadWorks®, Inc. All rights reserved.

story was headlined "Good Samaritan Cleans Streets."

And then there were footsteps-loud, right-next-to-them footsteps. Felicia dropped the stack and fought for air. Jessica screamed. They turned to see who, or what, was in the doorway.

Jessica recognized the woman. "Margie?" It was Jessica's mom's friend.

"I see you found my uncle's old stomping grounds. It needs some work, but I just couldn't ever bring myself to clean through it after he passed. Insomniac Sam, they'd call him. It's funny. He was so messy at home, and yet he never could pass a piece of litter on the sidewalk without doing something about it."

ReadWorks.org · © 2015 ReadWorks®, Inc. All rights reserved.

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

1. Where do Jessica and Felicia go walking?

A. in the woods
B. in a city
C. in a field
D. down a dark alley

2. How many main characters are there in this story?

A. three
B. two
C. one
D. zero

3. Read these sentences from the text.

"'How about here?' Jessica called up from the ground, where she lay on her belly. 'If we crawl, it's almost like a little tunnel.'

"Felicia crouched down and peered into the brush. 'Whoa! It's like a beaver tunnel or something, but in the bushes. Let's do it.'

"Felicia felt the tingle of adventure on her spine. It was the same tingle she felt when she jumped off the high diving board in swim class or neared the top of a giant rollercoaster drop."

Based on this evidence, how does Felicia probably feel about crawling under the bushes?

A. depressed
B. indifferent
C. terrified
D. excited

ReadWorks.org · © 2020 ReadWorks®, Inc. All rights reserved.

4. What is the mood of this story?

A. suspenseful

B. peaceful

C. hopeful

D. gloomy

5. What is a theme of this story?

A. deception

B. loyalty

C. adventure

D. disappointment

6. Read these sentences from the text.

"The girls had been certain they knew every inch of the woods, yet neither of them had ever noticed this path before. There was no clear route to get to it from where they were, but only ten feet of bushes stood between them and the new path."

What does the word "route" most nearly mean as used in the text?

A. destination

B. map

C. path

D. highway

ReadWorks.org · © 2020 ReadWorks®, Inc. All rights reserved.

7. Read these sentences from the text.

"They stared at the trunk, both wondering what could be inside. Jessica knelt beside it and lifted the heavy top. It was filled to the brim with yellowing copies of the Tintown Gazette."

The last of these three sentences is written in the passive voice. How could it be rewritten in the active voice?

A. The trunk was filled to the brim with yellowing copies of the *Tintown Gazette*.
B. Yellowing copies of the *Tintown Gazette* were filling it to the brim.
C. Yellowing copies of the *Tintown Gazette* filled it to the brim.
D. It was brimming with yellowing copies of the *Tintown Gazette*.

8. Read these sentences from the text.

"'This has to be it, Leesh,' Jessica whispered, her eyes widening with excitement and concern.

"'Be what?'

"'The cabin Joey told us about over the summer. Don't you remember?'

"Felicia had pushed it to the back of her mind, but now she remembered. Jessica's brother Joey was full of stories, mostly the kind you didn't want to hear because they'd keep you up all night, worrying they'd make their way into your dreams."

Based on this information, what can you conclude about what Joey told Jessica and Felicia about the cabin?

9. What words does the author use to describe the footsteps that Jessica and Felicia hear near the end of the story?

10. Explain how the author creates suspense in this story. Support your answer with evidence from the text.

ReadWorks.org · © 2020 ReadWorks®, Inc. All rights reserved.