

**Directions: Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow!**

# Trouble at Reading Railroad

By W.M. Akers

1 "Those aren't the rules!" said Mario.

2 "This is my house! I'll tell you what the rules are!" said Nicky.

3 The two cousins stared at each other, both refusing to blink. They were warriors about to leap at each other's throats and settle their argument with violence. The battlefield lay between them, their armies strewn across it. It was not an ordinary battlefield covered with tanks and cannons and soldiers. It was a square, covered in colorful rectangles, some guarded by green and red plastic fortresses. But although the war wasn't real, the fight between Nicky and Mario was. They were playing Monopoly and prepared to do anything to win.



4 It had started that afternoon when Mario's mom dropped him off at Nicky's house. They were cousins, nearly the same age, and had been playing together since they were born. They had played pirates and action figures, video games and tag, and had always had a good time. But whenever they had made the mistake of playing Monopoly, the same thing always had happened.

5 It always started with an argument over who got to be which piece. Obviously, both of them wanted to be the car.

6 "This is my house," Nicky would say. "I get to be the car. "

7 "You were the car last time. "

8 "This is my house," Nicky would repeat, not quite shouting yet. The shouting would come later.

9 They would always argue about who would be the banker and who the realtor. Managing the properties was preferable, of course, because it involved less counting. Counting is never fun.

10 "I'm the realtor," Mario would say. "No," Nicky would reply.

11 "I called it. "

12 "My house. "

13 "I called it," Mario would repeat, a little bit closer to shouting this time. "Fine. "

14 And so, the Monopoly war always started quietly, but it would get a little bit louder after each turn around the board. For the first few rolls, there would be little conflict. Mario would buy Vermont Avenue; Nicky would buy St. Charles. But then one of them would get a property the other wanted.

15 "You can't buy Connecticut Avenue," Mario would say. "I need that one for my monopoly. " "Well, I don't want you to get a monopoly," Nicky would say, "but I'll sell it to you. "

16 "Okay. "

17 "Ten thousand dollars. "

18 "There aren't even ten thousand dollars in the game," Mario would say, very nearly shouting. "Okay. How about twenty thousand? "

19 "No deal. "

20 No trades would ever be made. The game would stalemate and go on forever, unless one of them got a monopoly by sheer chance. Then the taunting would begin.

21 "Oh wow," Mario would say. "You have Baltic Avenue, Connecticut, and St. Charles. Those are really great properties. "

22 "Oh, so what? So you've got all the yellows. Everyone knows the yellows are the worst. Who is Marvin Gardens, anyway? "

23 "I don't know, but as soon as I get a hotel on him, it's gonna cost you \$1,200 to find out. "

24 Their voices would get louder. Their sentences would get shorter. Their faces would get red as they counted out each move, slamming their pieces down with greater and greater fury. But they would not yell, no matter who landed on Free Parking, no matter how many hotels were built, no matter what monopolies were acquired. They would not yell...until one of them drew The Card.

25 Every time they landed on Chance, the room would grow quiet. They would lift the flimsy red cards slowly, knowing it could be the match that lit the flame.

26 And finally, as it always eventually did, The Card had appeared.

27 "Take a ride on the Reading Railroad," Mario had read. "If you pass Go, collect \$200. "

28 They both had looked at the board. Mario's piece-the hat, the stupid, boring, awful hat-had been on the Chance space two spots past Reading Railroad. If he went forward around the board, he would pass Go. He would get \$200. He would be able to afford the railroad-one of his favorite properties-and the game would shift in his favor. But he had known Nicky wouldn't let that happen.

29 Nicky had picked up Mario's piece.

30 "Put that down," Mario had said.

31 Nicky had then moved it back two rectangles and put it on Reading Railroad.

32 "You know it goes forward," Mario had said. "You know it does! "

33 "The card doesn't say anything about that. "

34 "The pieces always go forward. Always. "

35 "Only on the cards that say 'Advance.' This doesn't say anything about it, so you take the most direct route. That means you go backwards. That means you don't get \$200. My turn. "

36 "Those aren't the rules! "

37 "This is my house! I'll tell you what the rules are! "

38 Now they were shouting. Now Mario didn't care about Reading Railroad anymore. Now all he wanted was to be right.

39 Nicky stood up, sore from so many hours sitting cross-legged. "Give me the dice," he said. "It's my turn. "

40 "I move forward. I get \$200. " "Give me the dice! "

41 Mario dropped the dice on the board, and Nicky bent down to pick them up. Mario bent down too, but he didn't reach for the dice. Without shouting at all, he slipped one finger under the board and flipped it as high as it would go. Money fluttered down from the ceiling like a very colorful snowstorm, as houses and hotels fell with all the clatter of plastic hail.

42 Nicky opened his mouth like he wanted to scream, but no words came out. "I don't think this game works with two people," Mario said softly.

43 Nicky nodded. They cleaned up the game together, silently.

44 The cousins never talked about it again, but they both knew that they could not get along when they tried to play Monopoly. After the last Monopoly war ended in silence, the two boys never played with just each other, again.



1.) The main conflict in this passage is-

- a.) There is not enough money in the game to go around.
- b.) Mario and Nicky cannot play anything together without getting into a fight.
- c.) Mario and Nicky do not agree on the Monopoly rules.
- d.) Mario and Nicky did not want to clean up the game.

2.) The main conflict can be found in paragraph-

- a.) 41
- b.) 42
- c.) 43
- d.) 44

3.) What is the resolution?

- a.) Mario and Nicky agree on the rules of Monopoly.
- b.) Mario and Nicky never play Monopoly together again.
- c.) Mario tells Nicky that he is right.
- d.) Nicky tells Mario that he is right.

4.) The resolution can be found in paragraph-

- a.) 41
- b.) 42
- c.) 43
- d.) 44