

Literary Elements: Theme

Every story always has one big idea that the author wants you to understand. In some stories, the big idea is a lesson about life. Maybe the author wants you to understand that friends are important or that practice makes perfect. Sometimes the author tells you what the big idea is, but not always. When you read a story, think about what the characters learn. Ask yourself, What does the author want me to know from this story? Your answer may be the big idea.

Read the story about Bear. See if you can figure out what the author wants you to understand.

Bear listened quietly to the bird's song. It was so lovely that he decided to capture the bird so he could hear its music all the time. In the bush there were two birds. One was plain, with dull brown feathers, but the other's orange feathers were as bright as sunshine!

"The beautiful one must be the singer!" said Bear. He snatched it, but the beautiful bird did not sing. It squawked so harshly that Bear let it go. From the safety of a treetop, the plain brown bird sang a song that was as sweet as honey.



Fill in the circle next to the sentence that best tells the big idea of the story.

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ You can't always judge something by the way it looks. | ☐ Beauty on the outside means beauty on the inside. |
| ☐ Treat others as you wish to be treated. | ☐ Birds can make beautiful music. |

What details helped you choose your answer?

Tip

Every story always has one big idea the author wants you to know. Sometimes what you already know can also help you understand a story's big idea.

Jake's Haircut

by Robin Pulver

"Oh, no!" Jake said. "My hair! I can't go to school tomorrow. I can't face my friends with this big bare spot showing!"

Mom frowned at her new barber shears. "I'm sorry, Jake. I should have practiced before I tried these out. It's a good thing hair grows back."

To make this horrible day worse, Jake's dog, Cal, was sick. Jake's father took him to visit the veterinarian, and Cal had to stay overnight.

Jake slept restlessly that night. He missed his dog. Cal always listened to Jake's problems.

On his way to school the next day, Jake saw his neighbor, Martha. "What did you do to your hair?" she asked, staring.

"Nothing," said Jake, struggling to be polite. He hurried to catch up with his friends Anna and Tomas, and told them about Cal.

"Cal's a great dog," they said. "He has to get better." They didn't mention Jake's hair. Real friends care about the way you feel inside, Jake thought, not the way you look on the outside.

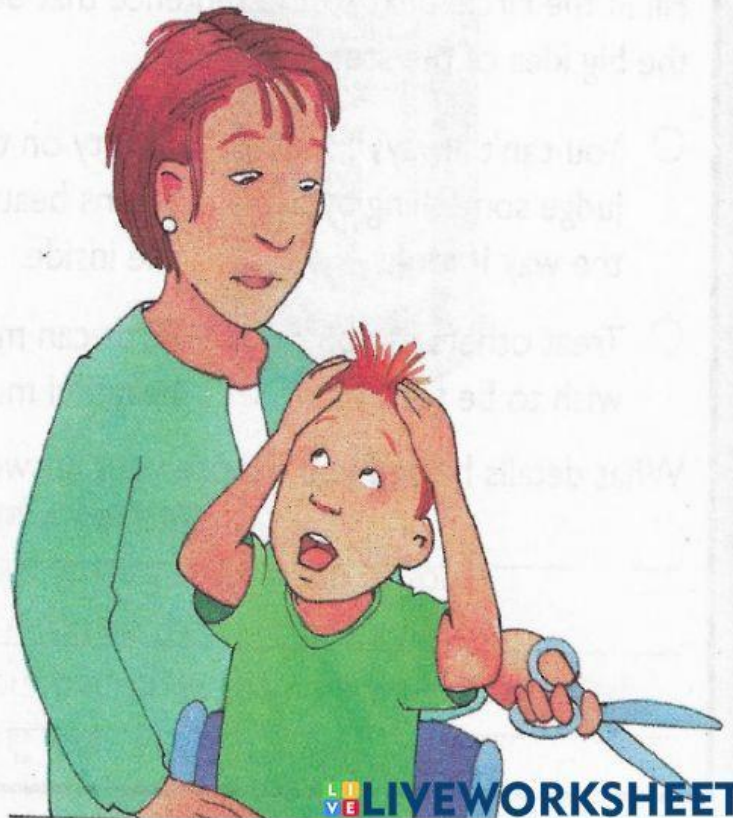
When Jake got home from school, Mom was smiling. "Terrific news," she said. "Guess who's better?"

"Cal!" Jake shouted. "Is he home?" Just then, Cal came up and licked Jake's hand.

Jake hugged his dog. "Cal, what happened to *your* hair?" he asked.

"The vet had to shave that spot to give him a shot," Mom said.

Jake laughed. "As long as he's OK, he's still the same old Cal. Anyway, hair grows back!"



Checking Comprehension

Write the answer to each question on the lines.

1. What are Jake's two problems in the story?

2. How are Jake and Cal alike at the end of the story?

Practicing Comprehension Skills

Write the answer to the question on the lines.

3. What did you discover about friendship from reading this story?

Read each story detail. Write X next to details that have to do with the big idea of the story.

- ___ 4. Jake's dog is named Cal.
- ___ 5. Jake is afraid to face his friends.
- ___ 6. Martha stares at Jake.
- ___ 7. Cal had to be taken to the veterinarian.
- ___ 8. Jake's friends do not mention his hair.
- ___ 9. Cal licks Jake's hand.
- ___ 10. Jake decides that hair grows back.
- ___ 11. Cal had to be given a shot.



Fill in the circle next to the correct answer.

12. What is the big idea the writer wants you to know from reading this story?
- ☐ Friends aren't always polite when you do something different. ☐ How you look is not as important as who you are and how you feel.
- ☐ Everyone should have real friends. ☐ Pets sometimes get sick.
13. What does the big idea make you think about?
- _____
- _____

Practicing Vocabulary

Write a word from the box to finish each sentence.

listened veterinarian mention frowned restlessly polite visit

14. The _____ examined the sick cat.
15. The students _____ to their teacher.
16. They didn't _____ that Cora's socks did not match.
17. Bad dreams can make people sleep _____.
18. Mom _____ at the mess in the kitchen.
19. It is _____ to say "please" and "thank you."
20. You should _____ the dentist once a year.