

A Sudden Slice of Summer



The snow began to fall early this year, in November, before Susannah even had a chance to bring her puffed-up purple winter coat out of the closet. It did not stop. Cold white confetti came down on the city of Montreal morning, noon, and night, and already Susannah was wondering when the party would end. The other kids in her class loved the snow. They loved that sometimes, when the winds picked up and the roads turned icy, school was cancelled. They liked to build towering forts and snowmen, whose noses were the carrot sticks they found packed in their lunchboxes.

Susannah despised the snow. More than that, she hated everything about wintertime. Her family had taken a trip to Florida two winters ago, and she wished that they could live there all year round. She had bobbed up and down in the ocean waves, sometimes floating on her back and other times, with goggles on, searching for colored fish in the water. In the mornings, her mother had squeezed fresh juice from the Florida-grown oranges that the hotel left in a basket at the front desk. With her brother and sister, Susannah had constructed a magnificent castle on the beach, with a moat and a long, looping flight of stairs. She liked feeling the sand between her fingers. It stuck together every bit as well as snow did, and it didn't make your teeth chatter.

At the end of this week, Susannah's family was going to drive an hour north to the ski hill. They would spend Saturday there, riding chairlifts to the top of a frosted mountain and following the slopes back down. Susannah refused to go with them. She wanted nothing to do with that thick, white, powdery stuff. It was bad enough that she had to trudge through it every day on her way to Sunnydale Elementary. Arrangements had been made: Grandma was coming to the house to look after her. She was determined to stay warm and dry. There were packets of hot cocoa in the pantry.

Susannah's parents finished packing up the car. Her siblings, who had been throwing snowballs into the air and at each other, piled into the backseat. Soon the station wagon disappeared from view, and Grandma settled into an armchair in front of the television. In a few quick minutes, she was asleep. Susannah glanced outside and gave a sigh. Her hot chocolate was just about gone. She was about to turn towards the sink to rinse her mug when out of the corner of her eye she caught something green. Something green? In her blank, white backyard? She pressed her face up against the kitchen window.

There, in the corner of the yard closest to the sliding back door, the snow had melted away. In its place, a small tree with low-hanging fruit was growing. Susannah immediately ran out to it. Elsewhere, the snowy flakes continued to swirl, but not a single one landed on this bright patch of ground, which was covered in sand. The sun beamed down on Susannah—so hard, in fact, that she was hot! Sweating hot! Half-buried by her feet were a plastic shovel and pail. She couldn't believe it. A small slice of the tropical holiday she had been missing had landed right behind her house. She ran inside for her bathing suit.

For the next few hours, while Grandma lay dozing, Susannah sprawled out on her own little beach. At first, she could not stop smiling. She giddily stretched out her limbs and moved them back and forth, making a snow angel—no, a sand angel! She read a bit of a book. She picked a few oranges and unpeeled them one by one. She dug holes and then filled them in again. After that, she didn't quite know what to do. Apparently, the pleasures of the warm sand beach were a lot less fun when there was no one around to share them with. Susannah would have woken her grandmother, but she remembered that Grandma didn't much care for the sun. She had spent the family's entire Florida vacation under both an umbrella and a huge-brimmed hat. Besides, the sunny space wasn't big enough for two.

By late afternoon, Susannah wasn't feeling very well. Her mother hadn't been around to lather her in suntan lotion and her skin had turned a very dark shade of pink. She had eaten so many sickly sweet oranges that she now had a stomachache. She had gotten some sand in her eye and had to blink furiously to get it out. The sun was strong and unrelenting. She glanced over to the other side of the yard. She was reluctant to admit it, even to herself, but the snow looked sort of...refreshing. She imagined racing her siblings to the bottom of that frosted mountain. Perhaps skiing with her family wouldn't have been so terrible? She was flushed and bored, but most of all she missed them.

She trudged inside, showered the sweat and the sand off of her body and then joined her Grandma, who had finally awoken, at the table. “My dear! However did you manage to get that awful sunburn?” her grandmother wailed. Susannah just shrugged. She wasn’t very hungry, but she managed to pack in some forkfuls of spaghetti and three meatballs. Before bed, she crept over to the backdoor and peered out. The sand, the tree, the bucket—all were gone. Susannah began to think that she had imagined it. She wasn’t that disappointed. Her brother and sister would be back in the morning and she badly wanted to play with them. Even if it meant being chilly.

The car pulled into the driveway. Susannah was up with a start, and she charged downstairs. She welcomed both of her parents home with hugs and gave one to her grandmother, too, who was preparing to leave. Then, as her mother began to ready breakfast, she pulled on her snowsuit and joined her siblings in the back. They were sculpting animals—a caterpillar with snowy lumps for a body; a fish with a three-dimensional fin—and they were surprised to see her there. She dropped to her knees, without explanation, and began to work. Her hat was pulled low over her ears, her mittens were lined with wool, and suddenly her sister’s hand was over hers, helping to smooth out the fish’s curved tail. She could wait for summer. She was warm enough.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What season does Susannah dislike at the beginning of the story?

- A spring
- B summer
- C fall
- D winter

2. Where do the main events of this story take place?

- A in Susannah's home and yard in Montreal
- B at Susannah's school in Montreal
- C in Florida on a vacation that Susannah's family takes
- D at a ski hill that Susannah's family visits

3. Susannah does not like being outside in the snow.

What evidence from the story supports this statement?

- A Susannah built a sandcastle on the beach in Florida.
- B Susannah refuses to go skiing with her family.
- C Susannah decides not to wake up her grandmother.
- D Susannah helps her sister make a fish out of snow.

4. Why does Susannah like spending the winter in Florida more than in Montreal?

- A Florida is colder than Montreal and gets more snow.
- B Florida is warmer than Montreal and gets less snow.
- C The orange juice in Florida is better than the hot chocolate in Montreal.
- D Susannah gets along better with her siblings in Florida than she does in Montreal.

5. What is this story mainly about?

- A a girl whose favorite time of year changes from winter to summer
- B a girl who has always loved winter because of the snow and ski trips she takes with her family
- C a girl who wants to move to Florida to get away from her family because she does not enjoy playing with her siblings
- D a girl who realizes that being with her siblings in the cold snow is better than being alone in warm weather

6. Read the following sentences: "The snow began to fall early this year, in November, before Susannah even had a chance to bring her puffed-up purple winter coat out of the closet. It did not stop. **Cold white confetti** came down on the city of Montreal morning, noon, and night. . . ."

What does the phrase **cold white confetti** refer to?

- A paper that Susannah is tearing into pieces
- B the stuffing inside Susannah's winter coat
- C the city of Montreal
- D the falling snow

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

One corner of Susannah's yard is green and hot _____ the rest of the yard is covered in snow.

- A also
- B because
- C although
- D therefore

8. Describe how Susannah feels about winter and snow by the end of the story.

9. In the story it says Susannah realized that the pleasures of the warm sand beach were a lot less fun when there was no one around to share them with.

Explain the reasons why Susannah loved her vacation in Florida so much.

10. Read the following sentences about Susannah from the end of the story:

“Her hat was pulled low over her ears, her mittens were lined with wool, and suddenly her sister’s hand was over hers, helping to smooth out the fish’s curved tail. She could wait for summer. She was warm enough.”

Explain why Susannah would feel “warm enough” even though she was still playing in the cold snow.

Teacher Guide & Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 810

Passage Summary: “A Sudden Slice of Summer” is about a girl who hates wintertime. When her family goes on a ski trip, she stays at home and makes a surprising discovery. A patch of summer sand and weather magically materializes in her backyard. However, a day of play in this sunny spot alone changes her feelings about climate.

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- D **winter**

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8. Describe how Susannah feels about winter and snow by the end of the story.

Suggested answer: By the end of the story, snow seems refreshing to Susannah. She seems to like winter and playing in the snow.

9. In the story it says Susannah realized that the pleasures of the warm sand beach were a lot less fun when there was no one around to share them with.

Explain the reasons why Susannah loved her vacation in Florida so much.

Suggested answers: Students can explain that Susannah liked the warm weather and playing in the water and in the sand. However, students also should explain that being with her family and siblings was also an important reason why she enjoyed Florida and all of these other things so much.

10. Read the following sentences about Susannah from the end of the story:

"Her hat was pulled low over her ears, her mittens were lined with wool, and suddenly her sister's hand was over hers, helping to smooth out the fish's curved tail. She could wait for summer. She was warm enough."

Explain why Susannah would feel "warm enough" even though she was still playing in the cold snow.

Suggested answer: Students can explain that her mittens were lined with wool (which is warm) and/or that she had a hat pulled over her head and ears. They can also explain that her sister's hand was over hers so that may have kept Susannah warm enough.

However, students should also explain that Susannah felt "warm enough" because she was playing with her siblings, was together with her family, and wasn't lonely and bored anymore. In other words, part of why she was feeling warm had nothing to do with temperature. It was the result of her feeling happy and being with her family.