

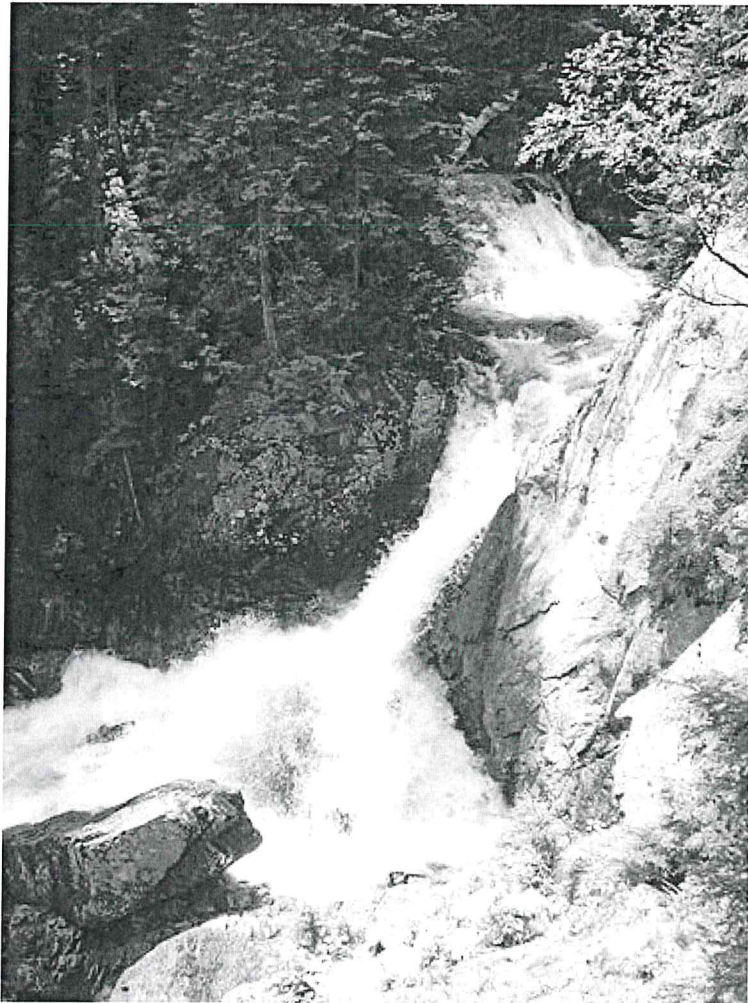
## Accommodations/Modifications for Assignments

- Take frequent breaks. Do a few problems and then take a stretch break.
- You can read the material aloud to your child.
- You can write the answers down for your child.
- Let your child type or text their answers.
- You can shorten the amount of problems your child has to do. Example, do the odd (1,3,5,7, etc.) numbered problems or the even (2,4,6,8, etc.) numbered problems.
- Your child can use a calculator if needed for math problems with several steps to complete.
- You can use hands on activities to support the lesson. Example, use objects to count to help your child add or subtract math problems.

Additional review work is also included. If your child has trouble with the assignment that has been posted, you can work on alternative assignments that are included.

# The Big Hike

by ReadWorks



Tamara opened her eyes and jumped out of bed. Most days she hated getting up early. But today was different. Today Tamara was wide awake and excited. Today her family was going on a hike. This was Tamara's first hike. She pulled on her new shoes and tied the laces. Tamara's mother had bought the new shoes just for the hike. They were brown boots. The bottom of the boots was made of rubber and had curves to help Tamara walk on rocky ground. Tamara put on pants, a shirt, and a big jacket. She was ready to go hiking.

"Tamara," her mother called. "Are you ready?"

"Yes, I am!" Tamara said.

Tamara ran down the stairs. Her mother and older brother James were there at the bottom.

They were all wearing new boots like Tamara's. James was hopping up and down impatiently. Everyone was ready for the hike.

Tamara's family got into the car. They drove for two hours until they were far away from the city. Once they left the city and the suburbs, there weren't many buildings beside the road. Instead there were trees and fields. Tamara saw herds of cows chewing on grass. The road climbed up. They were driving into the mountains. Tamara rolled down her window. The air was cool, and she liked it. It smelled like leaves and flowers. Soon, Tamara's mother parked the car.

"Are we here? Is this the hike?" asked Tamara.

"Yes," said James. "See that trail? That's where we'll start hiking." James had hiked this trail before, and it was one of his favorites.

Tamara looked at the trail. It was a dirt path and went into the forest. Tall trees and tiny flowers lined both sides of the path. Tamara, her mother, and her brother began to walk. Butterflies and bumblebees flew over the flowers. At first the bees made Tamara nervous, but soon she saw that they were more interested in the flowers than they were in her.

Tamara's mother talked about the other times the family had gone hiking. James talked about the time he went camping with the Boy Scouts. Tamara wanted to talk, but she felt out of breath. The trail was steep. They had been walking uphill for an hour by now. Tamara took hold of her mother's hand. "I'm tired," she said.

"Come on, Tamara," said her brother. "You can do it! You're ten years old. That's old enough to hike."

Tamara kept going. If her brother said she could do it, Tamara knew she could. James never lied. They kept walking uphill. Tamara looked around at the plants to keep her mind off of how tired she felt. There was green everywhere. There were trees with long draping leaves that Tamara had never seen before. She saw a small and furry rabbit by the side of the trail. Tamara gasped with surprise, and the rabbit ran away at the sound.

"Look, Tamara!" her brother called suddenly. The trail had ended. Tamara and her family were at a pool at the bottom of a waterfall. Tamara looked up at the water rushing down at the fish swimming in the pool. Her mother sat on a rock at the edge of the pool and began to unpack their picnic. There were peanut butter and banana sandwiches, baby carrots, and chocolate chip cookies. Tamara took off her boots and sat on the edge of the rock. As she bit into her sandwich, she dipped her toes into the cool water. "Congratulations, Tamara!" said her mother. "You just finished your first hike!" Tamara smiled. She decided that she liked hiking.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. In the story, Tamara goes on her first what?

- A. bike ride
- B. school trip
- C. hike
- D. camping trip

2. While Tamara is hiking up the trail, she looks around at all of the different plants. What motivates this action?

- A. Tamara wants to keep her mind off of how tired she feels.
- B. Tamara wants to study the plants for a test at school.
- C. Tamara wants to try to find a rabbit in the plants and bushes.
- D. Tamara wants to keep her mind off of how scared she is.

3. Tamara is able to experience new things on the hike. What information from the passage best supports this conclusion?

- A. Tamara's mother talks about the other times the family has gone hiking.
- B. Tamara hikes on a trail that is far away from the city where she lives.
- C. Tamara and her family end up at a pool at the bottom of a waterfall.
- D. Tamara sees trees with long draping leaves she has never seen before.

4. Read the following sentences: "If her brother said she could do it, Tamara knew she could. James never lied." Based on this information, how does Tamara feel about her brother?

- A. Tamara dislikes her brother.
- B. Tamara trusts her brother.
- C. Tamara thinks her brother is cool.
- D. Tamara doesn't trust her brother.

5. What is this story mostly about?

- A. Tamara sees a rabbit on the trail.
- B. Tamara has a picnic with her family.
- C. Tamara goes on her first hike.
- D. Tamara sees a waterfall and a pool.

6. Read the following sentences: "She saw a small and furry rabbit by the side of the trail. Tamara **gasp**ed with surprise, and the rabbit ran away at the sound."

As used in this sentence, what does the word "**gasp**ed" most nearly mean?

- A. took in and let out a long breath to show boredom
- B. said something quietly so that only one person would hear
- C. said something very loudly because of anger
- D. breathed in suddenly and loudly because of surprise or shock

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

Tamara gets tired after hiking for an hour, \_\_\_\_\_ she keeps hiking anyway.

- A. but
- B. so
- C. after
- D. like

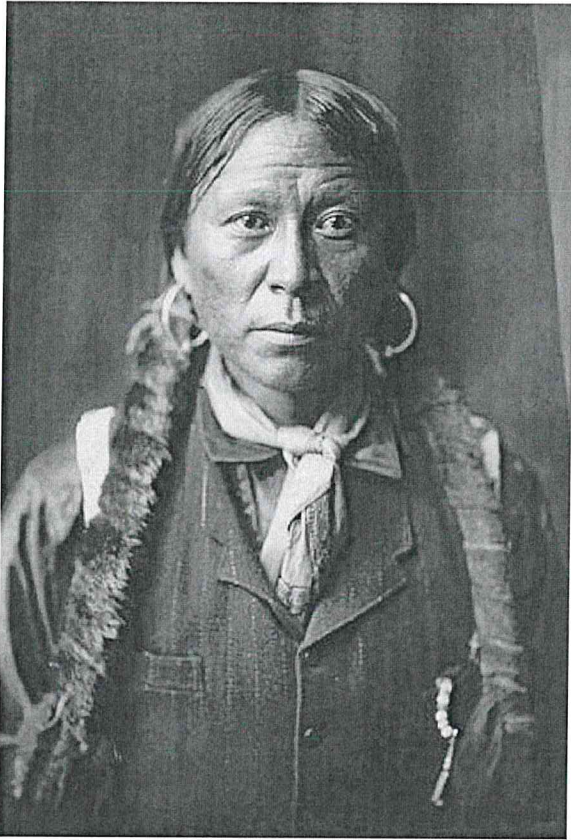
8. How does Tamara feel when she wakes up?

9. Most days Tamara hates getting up early, but today is different. Why does Tamara feel differently today?

10. The author states at the end of the passage that Tamara "decided that she liked hiking." What may have made Tamara feel this way? Use information from the passage to support your answer.

# They Call Them Apaches

by W.M. Akers



The Apaches, one of the most famous Native American groups, have lived in North America for more than 600 years.

Apache is pronounced "uh-PAH-chee," and it isn't the only name for these remarkable people. In fact, it isn't even from the Apache language! There are different theories of where the term originated. According to some, it comes from a word meaning "enemy" in the language of the Zuni, a neighboring tribe. The Apache originally called themselves Ndee, which means "The People." Today, however, most Apache people refer to themselves as Apaches.

The Apache first came to what is now the southwestern part of the United States sometime between 1000 and 1400 AD-which means they had been living in the region for at least 100 years before Spanish explorers first reached the area. By the 19th century, theirs was one of the most interesting cultures in North America.

## What Was It Like To Be An Apache?

In the 19th century, the Apache did not spend much time on their feet. They were among the greatest horse riders in the country, and they rode horses every chance they got. Unlike European settlers, the Apache did not bother with saddles. Instead, they rode bareback.

Instead of staying in one place and building cities, the Apache were nomadic and liked to move around. As the seasons changed, the Apache would go with them. They would go one place to hunt and another to look for fruits and nuts to eat. They would go one place for the summer and another for the winter. Although they never stayed in one place for very long, the Apache had a great connection to the land.

## Where Did They Sleep?

There were three different kinds of Apache houses: the teepee, the wickiup, and the hogan. Teepees are cone-shaped tents that could be taken down and moved whenever it was time to go from one place to another. These were used by Apache living on the plains.

Wickiups and hogans were more permanent than teepees. Wickiups were 8-foot-tall wooden frames covered in brush. Hogans were made of mud or clay. They were used for shelter during the winter, when it was cold. The thick earthen walls would keep Apache warm when it was too cold for life on the plains.

## What Is Apache Life Like Today?

In the late 1800s, the Apache fought a series of wars against the United States Army. Led by great warriors like Geronimo and Cochise, they fought for years to protect their way of life. But the United States Army was too strong for them and gradually forced the Apache onto reservations in New Mexico and Arizona.

Today, Apache people on those reservations work to maintain their ancient culture. Though they are proud of their past, they lead modern lives. There are Apache all over the country, from New York to Los Angeles. After hundreds of years in the United States, Apache culture remains as exciting as ever.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Who are the Apaches?

- A. a Native American group that has lived in North America for more than 600 years
- B. a Native American group that has lived in the Northeast United States for fewer than 500 years
- C. the descendants of a group of German people who moved to the United States in the 1800s
- D. the descendants of a group of English people who moved to the United States between 1650 and 1750

2. What does this passage describe?

- A. This passage describes the Zuni tribe and its history.
- B. This passage describes Apache life in the past and present.
- C. This passage describes life in New York and Los Angeles during the 19th century.
- D. This passage describes the journey of a European settler coming to the United States.

3. Read these sentences: "Teepees are cone-shaped tents that could be taken down and moved whenever it was time to go from one place to another. These were used by Apache living on the plains."

What conclusion do these sentences support?

- A. The Apache were great horse riders.
- B. The Apache were defeated by the United States Army.
- C. The Apache spent their whole lives in the same place.
- D. The Apache moved around a lot.

4. Based on the passage, what was the relationship like between the Apache and the United States in the 1800s?

- A. kind and friendly
- B. violent and unfriendly
- C. respectful and admiring
- D. quiet and peaceful



5. What is this passage mostly about?

- A. the lives of Geronimo and Cochise
- B. plants found in the southwest United States
- C. the Apache people and their past
- D. European settlers in the United States

6. Read this sentence: "Instead of staying in one place and building cities, the Apache were **nomadic** and liked to move around."

What does the word "**nomadic**" mean?

- A. moving from place to place
- B. living in one place for a long time
- C. eating only meat and fish
- D. raising plants and animals for food

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

The Apaches lived in three different kinds of houses, \_\_\_\_\_ the teepee, the wickiup, and the hogan.

- A. before
- B. after
- C. namely
- D. instead

8. What did the Apache do as the seasons changed?

9. Where do Apaches live today?

10. How is Apache life today similar to Apache life of the past? Support your answer with evidence from the passage.

# Me and My Habits

by ReadWorks



The first thing I do every morning, before I stretch or get out of bed, is rub my eyes three times with closed fists. Then I get out of bed and tap my right big toe on the floor three times before walking to the bathroom to brush my teeth.

It's not that I enjoy the odd habits or anything. I'm just used to them, and they're kind of a part of me. As I brush my teeth, I look at myself in the mirror. I like to inventory things about me that relate to my family. I have light green eyes and thick eyebrows like my dad's, a short nose like my mom's, and a ton of freckles, like my older brother Joey. If you look at my face closely, you will see that I am really not my own person. I'm just someone made up of the different parts of everyone else in my family.

My friend Susanna says that's kind of a morbid way of thinking about my life, but I don't think

she knows the correct way to use the word "morbid."

After I'm done brushing my teeth, I walk back to my bedroom, toe-to-heel, very slowly. Then I get dressed for school. We have to wear a uniform, so I wear the same thing every day: a blue and green plaid skirt with a navy blue polo shirt and black loafers. Susanna finds the uniform boring (she says it infringes on her self-identity), but I don't mind it so much. It's just one less thing I have to worry about in the morning.

I eat the same thing for breakfast every day: oatmeal with bananas and a few spoonfuls of brown sugar. My mom prepares breakfast for Joey and me because our dad has usually already left for work by the time we're ready for breakfast.

Joey sits at the head of the table, and I sit at the foot of the table. He always reads the sports section of the newspaper, and I always get the front page.

On the way to school, I buckle and unbuckle the seat belt two times. My mom doesn't ever say anything, but my habit seems to really annoy Joey.

"Rose, *stop it!*" he says, turning around to glare at me from the front seat.

"Just ignore it!" I respond, and click once more.

"Settle down, settle down," Mom says.

We are all quiet on the rest of the way to school. My mom says it takes her a while to wake up in the morning; otherwise she'd be chattier. I don't mind though. It's sometimes nice just to watch the streets go by out the car window, with the people walking along the sidewalks. We always listen to the same radio show, "The Darnell Owens Show," whose emcees talk about movies. They especially love film noir.

When we get to school, Joey slams the door behind him, and I reach between the front seats to give my mom a kiss good-bye.

In school, I meet Susanna by our lockers. They're right next to each other in a prime spot by our classroom, because Susanna complained to the principal that she didn't feel comfortable "expressing herself" on the inside of her locker next to any other person in our grade. (Susanna's dad is a lawyer, and her mom is an artist.)

I open and close the locker three times before I reach inside to grab my books for social studies and math.

Susanna is chattering on about this new painting she and her mom did in her mom's studio

when the long shadow of William Jones crosses over us.

"Hey, freaks," he says.

Susanna and I glance at each other.

"What do you want, William?" Susanna says defiantly.

I'm always in such awe of her bravery. William started making fun of us when we were in first grade. That's when my habit really picked up, and he noticed that I was tapping the doorway three times every time we left the classroom or sneezing three times, even when I didn't have to. Well, Susanna started sticking up for me, which is how we became such great friends, but it only made things worse with William. Soon William started mimicking Susanna when she raised her hand to answer a question (which she did often), and mocking the way she walked, always with one hand on her hip.

"Just wanted to say good morning. Just wanted to say good morning. Just wanted to say good morning," he says, smiling and curling his lip. "Three times... Right, loser?"

I shake my head and turn back to my locker, like what he says doesn't hurt my feelings. I can't help my habit-it just pops up when I least expect it. My mom says the people who make fun of me are ignorant, but she still takes me to see Dr. P. every week to try to help me get over my habit.

"Doesn't it get old?" Susanna asks.

"Nope!" William bares his teeth at us and then walks into the classroom.

"Just forget him," Susanna says, patting me on the back. I'm glad Susanna is on my side.

Joey and I take the bus home together after school. At the bus stop, Joey always gets off first. He's supposed to wait for me to get off the bus before starting to walk home, but he rarely does. I end up walking a few yards behind him, watching his dirty backpack move up and down as he moves.

Mom has a snack waiting for us when we get home-carrots and ranch dressing-and every day we have to eat it and then do our homework right away. Joey says he does his homework in his room, but he's just playing video games. Mom lets him get away with it.

I sit down at the kitchen table and pull my worksheets out of my backpack to start in on my math homework. Mom sits next to me, takes a carrot out of the plastic dish, and dips it in ranch.

"How was school?"

"It was okay. William was teasing me again." Mom looks sad when I say this.

"I'm sorry, sweetie. Things will get better," she says.

"I know," I say. I do my homework and then go read in my room until it's time for dinner.

I wonder if I will ever "kick my habit," as Dr. P. likes to say. Dr. P. thinks that my habit is something I can train myself to give up. She thinks that with a little bit of effort on my part and with lots of help from her, I can learn not to need my habit to feel comfortable. Most of the time, I believe her and even want to kick my habit. Maybe then, Joey wouldn't be embarrassed of me, and William wouldn't tease me. But without my habit, I don't think that Susanna and I would have become friends. I also don't think that I'd feel the same sense of happiness I feel when I touch things or do things three times. There's something very back and forth about my relationship to my habit-I'm not sure I'm ready to give it up. Maybe someday in the future.

"Rose, dinner!" Mom calls.

I go to the bathroom, look at my face in the mirror, and wash my hands three times before going downstairs to eat.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Who is the narrator of this passage?

- A. William
- B. Rose
- C. Susanna
- D. Joey

2. Rose describes her "odd habits" throughout the passage. Which habit does she do each morning before brushing her teeth?

- A. rubs her eyes and taps her right big toe on the floor three times
- B. eats three bowls of oatmeal and bananas for breakfast
- C. buckles and unbuckles the seat belt three times
- D. opens and closes her locker three times

3. Rose shares a lot of information about Susanna, including things she has said, kind things she has done, and information about her life. Based on this, what conclusion can be made?

- A. Rose and Susanna are the same age.
- B. Rose and Susanna are close friends.
- C. Rose and Susanna have a lot in common.
- D. Rose and Susanna are strangers.

4. Rose experiences some negative consequences because of her habits. Which detail from the text supports this conclusion?

- A. Rose's friend Susanna thinks Rose has a morbid way of thinking about her life.
- B. William Jones makes fun of Rose.
- C. Rose's mother reassures Rose that things will get better.
- D. Rose thinks she wouldn't be friends with Susanna without her habit.

5. What is this passage mainly about?

- A. an argument between two close siblings
- B. how the narrator's habits affect her life
- C. a friendship between two classmates
- D. a visit to the principal's office

6. Read the following sentences: "I like to **inventory** things about me that relate to my family. I have light green eyes and thick eyebrows like my dad's, a short nose like my mom's, and a ton of freckles, like my older brother Joey."

As used in the passage, what does the word "**inventory**" mean?

- A. to ignore
- B. to criticize
- C. to make a list of
- D. to learn about

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

Rose thinks that if she kicked her habits, maybe Joey wouldn't be embarrassed of her and William wouldn't tease her. \_\_\_\_\_, she also thinks that without her habit, she wouldn't have become friends with Susanna or feel the same sense of happiness she feels when she touches things or does things three times.

- A. In conclusion
- B. However
- C. Frequently
- D. So

8. How have Rose's habits affected her relationship with her brother Joey? Use evidence from the passage to support your answer.

9. According to Rose, how did she and Susanna become great friends?

10. At the end of the passage, Rose concludes, "There's something very back and forth about my relationship to my habit." Explain why Rose says this by using evidence from the text.

# Capturing Ghost Dog

by ReadWorks



SOUTHERLY ENTRANCE, PROSPECT PARK.

Ghost Dog is a large Cane Corso Mastiff. This is a breed of dog that is very muscular and often weighs more than 100 pounds. Ghost Dog weighs 109 pounds! In 2012, Ghost Dog didn't have a home or owners. He didn't have a leash, a dinner bowl, and he certainly didn't have a dog bed. Instead, Ghost Dog lived alone in a large park in the middle of Brooklyn.

Of course he used to have owners. He has clipped ears and a docked tail, which are telltale signs that at one time he lived with humans. But when he was one or two years old, he began living in the park with no one to take care of him.

The weird thing was that people *did* take care of him. In fact, he was a well-known animal in the park, almost a celebrity. In the mornings, one man regularly fed him breakfast. Then Ghost Dog wandered to the dog beach and begged for scraps from dog owners. He spent the rest of the day relaxing in an open field in the park, or playing with other dogs. Other runners and walkers in the park fed him small treats. Sometimes he found scraps of food in the trashcans of nearby restaurants. He didn't like to be touched, and he didn't like when people he didn't know tried to come near him. After a long day of playing in the park, Ghost Dog went to sleep in the hollowed trunk of a fallen tree.

You might be wondering how anyone can know the details of Ghost Dog's daily routine. And



that's where Sean Casey becomes part of the story. Sean owns an Animal Rescue shelter and has spent much of his life helping animals in need. He first heard about Ghost Dog in 2008. He received complaints that a large, wild dog was roaming the park without a leash. The dog didn't seem dangerous or mean, but Sean wanted to make sure. He sent one of his workers into the park overnight. The worker followed Ghost Dog for 24 hours and learned what the dog did and how he survived.

Sean soon realized that Ghost Dog was very happy in the park, and that Ghost Dog wasn't mean or aggressive or dangerous. Ghost Dog was just a very big dog leading a very happy life in the middle of a very busy city.

But Sean was worried. A dog living alone in the park without a leash might cause problems in the future, especially if he became injured or sick. "We tried to capture him using ropes, but he was too smart. We could never get close enough," Sean says. So instead, Sean decided to monitor the dog's activities and wait until the right moment presented itself.

In May 2012, Sean began receiving reports that Ghost Dog was "haunting" the park and acting aggressively toward people. He says these reports were ridiculous. "He's a sweetheart," Sean said. But he noticed something else too: Ghost Dog was injured. He was limping and he moved slowly around the park. He seemed less scared of being captured. Sean knew Ghost Dog needed help. After four years in the park, maybe Ghost Dog was ready for a different home.

And so he unleashed a plan. One morning, Sean, his workers, and the man who regularly fed Ghost Dog captured the wild dog using ropes. They began by feeding him treats and circling him until they could get close enough to loop a rope around his neck. They brought another dog with them. This helped distract Ghost Dog who loved the company of other animals. Ghost Dog tried to fight, but eventually gave up and followed Sean into the Animal Rescue van.

Sean took Ghost Dog to a veterinarian. Ghost Dog had Lyme's Disease and an injured knee that required surgery. Sean kept him at a shelter until he was healed. For a dog that lived on his own for so long, Ghost Dog was surprisingly friendly and affectionate. He nuzzled Sean's leg and welcomed his touch.

Sean has spent a lot of time to rehabilitate Ghost Dog. He hopes that someone will adopt him, even if he is "a bit of a handful."

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Who is Ghost Dog?

- A. a pet who belonged to Sean Casey
- B. a wild dog that lived in a park in Brooklyn
- C. the ghost of a dead dog who haunts a park
- D. the dog of a famous celebrity

2. Which of the following shows the sequence of events described in the text in the correct order?

- A. Sean Casey receives complaints about Ghost Dog. Ghost Dog is injured. A worker follows Ghost Dog to learn how he survives. Sean Casey captures Ghost Dog and rehabilitates him.
- B. Ghost Dog is injured. Sean Casey receives complaints about Ghost Dog. A worker follows Ghost Dog to learn how he survives. Sean Casey captures Ghost Dog and rehabilitates him.
- C. Sean Casey receives complaints about Ghost Dog. A worker follows Ghost Dog to learn how he survives. Sean Casey captures Ghost Dog and rehabilitates him. Ghost Dog is injured.
- D. Sean Casey receives complaints about Ghost Dog. A worker follows Ghost Dog to learn how he survives. Ghost Dog is injured. Sean Casey captures Ghost Dog and rehabilitates him.

3. Ghost Dog has clipped ears and a docked tail. Based on this evidence, what conclusion can be made?

- A. Ghost Dog used to live with humans.
- B. Ghost Dog often fights with other dogs.
- C. Ghost Dog cannot hear very well.
- D. Ghost Dog has always lived in the park.

4. Based on the text, why might some people have complained about Ghost Dog in 2008?

- A. Ghost Dog was trying to play with people in the park.
- B. People were tired of feeding Ghost Dog scraps and treats.
- C. People were scared of Ghost Dog because he was wild and large.
- D. Ghost Dog was sick and people wanted to help him.

5. What is this text mostly about?

- A. the daily routine and eventual capture of a wild dog called Ghost Dog
- B. the people affected by the presence of a wild dog in the park
- C. the reasons why Ghost Dog first started living in the park
- D. the life and career of animal rescuer Sean Casey

6. Read the following sentences: "In May 2012, Sean began receiving reports that Ghost Dog was **'haunting'** the park and acting aggressively toward people. He says these reports were ridiculous."

One meaning of the word "haunt" is "to visit or live in a place as a ghost." Ghost Dog is not actually a ghost, so why does the author use the word "**haunting**" to describe Ghost Dog's behavior?

- A. to tell the reader that people thought Ghost Dog was a ghost
- B. to make it unclear whether Ghost Dog is dead or alive
- C. to tell the reader that Ghost Dog was hurting people
- D. to make a play on words based on Ghost Dog's name

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

\_\_\_\_\_ Ghost Dog had no owners and lived alone in the park, people took care of him by giving him food.

- A. Therefore
- B. Even though
- C. Above all
- D. For example

8. When Ghost Dog lived in the park, how did he feel about people he didn't know being near him?

9. After Ghost Dog was captured, Sean discovered that Ghost Dog was "surprisingly friendly and affectionate." Why might it have been surprising to find that Ghost dog was friendly and affectionate? Support your answer using evidence from the passage.

10. Imagine that Ghost Dog was adopted right after the text was written. Based on the information in the text, make an inference about how Ghost Dog might react to living in a home instead of the park. Cite details from the text to support your answer.

# Cool to Be Kind

by Kirsten Weir

## Put yourself in somebody else's shoes.

Amanda O. was in fourth grade when her mom passed away. Amanda had been bullied before, and, incredibly, older kids at school teased her about her devastating loss. "People bullied me about how I looked, how I dressed. They bullied me about my mom," says the 14-year-old from El Paso, Texas.

Amanda told the principal, who called the bullies' parents. Amanda also confronted the kids herself. "I said, 'You didn't know my mom. She was my best friend. If you lost a best friend, how would you feel?'"

The bullies backed off, and Amanda felt good about standing up for herself. She may not have realized it at the time, but Amanda was asking her tormentors to have a little empathy.

"Empathy is a matter of learning how to understand someone else-both what they think and how they feel," says Jennifer Freed, a family therapist and codirector of a teen program called the Academy of Healing Arts.

In other words, empathy is being able to put yourself in someone else's shoes. Many people who bully others are particularly weak in that department, says Malcolm Watson, a psychologist at Brandeis University in Massachusetts. "Bullies don't tend to have a lot of empathy," he says.

Everyone is different, and levels of empathy differ from person to person. "Some people are more highly sensitive than others. They will naturally feel what other people feel," Freed says. "Others don't understand emotions in other people as well."

The good news? "Empathy is something you can learn," Freed says. In fact, she adds, teaching empathy to prevent bullying is more effective than punishing bullies after the fact. And anyone can learn it. In her teen programs, she says, "every semester we see bullies change their behavior."



Jose L. Pelaez/Corbis

*Volunteering is a good way to develop more empathy, experts say.*

You don't have to be a bully to benefit from developing empathy. Having compassion for others is a valuable skill that everyone should work to improve, she says. "I think everyone needs to develop more of it."

## Emotional Intelligence

Last year, researchers from the University of Michigan reported that empathy among college students had dropped sharply over the past 10 years. That could be because so many people have replaced face time with screen time, the researchers said. Having empathy is about understanding other people. Today, people spend more time solo and are less likely to join groups and clubs.

Freed has another explanation. Turn on the TV, and you're bombarded with news and reality shows highlighting people fighting, competing, and generally treating one another with no respect. Humans learn by example-and most of the examples on TV are anything but empathetic.

There are good reasons not to follow those bad examples. Humans are social by nature. Having relationships with other people is an important part of being human-and having empathy is critical to those relationships. Researchers have also found that empathetic teenagers are more likely to have high self-esteem. That's not all. In a book titled *The Power of Empathy*, psychologist Arthur Ciaramicoli writes that empathy can be a cure for loneliness, depression, anxiety, and fear.

Empathy is also a sign of a good leader. In fact, Freed says, many top companies report that empathy is one of the most important things they look for in new executives. Good social skills-including empathy-are a kind of "emotional intelligence" that will help you succeed in many areas of life. "Academics are important. But if you don't have emotional intelligence, you won't be as successful in work or in your love life," she says.

What's the best way to up your empathy quotient? For starters, let down your guard and really listen to others. "One doesn't develop empathy by having a lot of opinions and doing a lot of talking," Freed says. Here are some great ways to dig beneath the surface and really get to know other people-and to boost empathy in the process:

- Volunteer at a nursing home or a hospital. Challenging yourself to care for others is a great way to learn empathy, Freed says.
- Join a club or a team that has a diverse membership. You can learn a lot from people of different ages, races, or backgrounds.
- Spend time caring for pets at an animal shelter.
- Once a week, have a "sharing circle" with your family. Take turns listening to one another talk, without interrupting.

## Playing Your Part

With bullying such a big issue in schools around the country, experts are looking more closely at empathy. Many schools are teaching teens how to tune in to others' feelings. Often, kids who bully others come from homes where empathy is in short supply, says Watson. Teaching them empathy skills can help squash their aggressive behavior. Just focusing on the bullies and their victims isn't enough to stop the bullying crisis, though. To do that, everyone in school must show some empathy.

Have you ever watched a classmate being teased or pushed around, without intervening? Imagine that victim was your little brother or a close friend. How would you feel about the situation then? It takes both courage and empathy to confront a bully or to report an incident to a teacher. It may not be easy, but working together is the best way to make schools safer, Watson says.

That makes sense to Patrick K., a 16-year-old from South Carolina. He was bullied in middle school and lived in constant fear. One day one of his tormentors threatened to kill him and later threw a rock at his head during gym class.

Fortunately, Patrick's family moved to a new school district not long after that incident, and things are much better at his new school. But he wasn't content to just sit back and let other kids suffer the way he had. He became a teen ambassador for Love Our Children USA's STOMP Out Bullying campaign.

Last year, Patrick saw a classmate getting pushed around at school. He immediately reported the incident to the principal and a guidance counselor. The school called the kids in to sort out the problem, he says. Patrick doesn't think he did anything special. "I feel that everybody should be treated with respect," he says. "I just felt like it was the right thing to do."

## Expressing Empathy-Creatively

If you've ever been called nasty names, you know how awful it feels. Here's your chance to help others understand what it's like to walk in your shoes. The No Name-Calling Week Creative Expression Contest wants your poems, artwork, essays, music, and videos! Tune in to your artistic side to illustrate how name-calling has affected you and your peers. No Name-Calling Week happens each year in January. (But being kind is cool any week of the year.)



Chris Price/Istock

# Me and My Habits

by ReadWorks



The first thing I do every morning, before I stretch or get out of bed, is rub my eyes three times with closed fists. Then I get out of bed and tap my right big toe on the floor three times before walking to the bathroom to brush my teeth.

It's not that I enjoy the odd habits or anything. I'm just used to them, and they're kind of a part of me. As I brush my teeth, I look at myself in the mirror. I like to inventory things about me that relate to my family. I have light green eyes and thick eyebrows like my dad's, a short nose like my mom's, and a ton of freckles, like my older brother Joey. If you look at my face closely, you will see that I am really not my own person. I'm just someone made up of the different parts of everyone else in my family.

My friend Susanna says that's kind of a morbid way of thinking about my life, but I don't think



she knows the correct way to use the word "morbid."

After I'm done brushing my teeth, I walk back to my bedroom, toe-to-heel, very slowly. Then I get dressed for school. We have to wear a uniform, so I wear the same thing every day: a blue and green plaid skirt with a navy blue polo shirt and black loafers. Susanna finds the uniform boring (she says it infringes on her self-identity), but I don't mind it so much. It's just one less thing I have to worry about in the morning.

I eat the same thing for breakfast every day: oatmeal with bananas and a few spoonfuls of brown sugar. My mom prepares breakfast for Joey and me because our dad has usually already left for work by the time we're ready for breakfast.

Joey sits at the head of the table, and I sit at the foot of the table. He always reads the sports section of the newspaper, and I always get the front page.

On the way to school, I buckle and unbuckle the seat belt two times. My mom doesn't ever say anything, but my habit seems to really annoy Joey.

"Rose, *stop it!*" he says, turning around to glare at me from the front seat.

"Just ignore it!" I respond, and click once more.

"Settle down, settle down," Mom says.

We are all quiet on the rest of the way to school. My mom says it takes her a while to wake up in the morning; otherwise she'd be chattier. I don't mind though. It's sometimes nice just to watch the streets go by out the car window, with the people walking along the sidewalks. We always listen to the same radio show, "The Darnell Owens Show," whose emcees talk about movies. They especially love film noir.

When we get to school, Joey slams the door behind him, and I reach between the front seats to give my mom a kiss good-bye.

In school, I meet Susanna by our lockers. They're right next to each other in a prime spot by our classroom, because Susanna complained to the principal that she didn't feel comfortable "expressing herself" on the inside of her locker next to any other person in our grade. (Susanna's dad is a lawyer, and her mom is an artist.)

I open and close the locker three times before I reach inside to grab my books for social studies and math.

Susanna is chattering on about this new painting she and her mom did in her mom's studio

when the long shadow of William Jones crosses over us.

"Hey, freaks," he says.

Susanna and I glance at each other.

"What do you want, William?" Susanna says defiantly.

I'm always in such awe of her bravery. William started making fun of us when we were in first grade. That's when my habit really picked up, and he noticed that I was tapping the doorway three times every time we left the classroom or sneezing three times, even when I didn't have to. Well, Susanna started sticking up for me, which is how we became such great friends, but it only made things worse with William. Soon William started mimicking Susanna when she raised her hand to answer a question (which she did often), and mocking the way she walked, always with one hand on her hip.

"Just wanted to say good morning. Just wanted to say good morning. Just wanted to say good morning," he says, smiling and curling his lip. "Three times... Right, loser?"

I shake my head and turn back to my locker, like what he says doesn't hurt my feelings. I can't help my habit-it just pops up when I least expect it. My mom says the people who make fun of me are ignorant, but she still takes me to see Dr. P. every week to try to help me get over my habit.

"Doesn't it get old?" Susanna asks.

"Nope!" William bares his teeth at us and then walks into the classroom.

"Just forget him," Susanna says, patting me on the back. I'm glad Susanna is on my side.

Joey and I take the bus home together after school. At the bus stop, Joey always gets off first. He's supposed to wait for me to get off the bus before starting to walk home, but he rarely does. I end up walking a few yards behind him, watching his dirty backpack move up and down as he moves.

Mom has a snack waiting for us when we get home-carrots and ranch dressing-and every day we have to eat it and then do our homework right away. Joey says he does his homework in his room, but he's just playing video games. Mom lets him get away with it.

I sit down at the kitchen table and pull my worksheets out of my backpack to start in on my math homework. Mom sits next to me, takes a carrot out of the plastic dish, and dips it in ranch.

"How was school?"

"It was okay. William was teasing me again." Mom looks sad when I say this.

"I'm sorry, sweetie. Things will get better," she says.

"I know," I say. I do my homework and then go read in my room until it's time for dinner.

I wonder if I will ever "kick my habit," as Dr. P. likes to say. Dr. P. thinks that my habit is something I can train myself to give up. She thinks that with a little bit of effort on my part and with lots of help from her, I can learn not to need my habit to feel comfortable. Most of the time, I believe her and even want to kick my habit. Maybe then, Joey wouldn't be embarrassed of me, and William wouldn't tease me. But without my habit, I don't think that Susanna and I would have become friends. I also don't think that I'd feel the same sense of happiness I feel when I touch things or do things three times. There's something very back and forth about my relationship to my habit-I'm not sure I'm ready to give it up. Maybe someday in the future.

"Rose, dinner!" Mom calls.

I go to the bathroom, look at my face in the mirror, and wash my hands three times before going downstairs to eat.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Use the article "Me and My Habits" to answer questions 1 to 2.**

1. How did Susanna and Rose become such great friends?
2. How does William treat Rose and Susanna? Use at least two details from the text in your answer.

**Use the article "Cool to Be Kind" to answer questions 3 to 4.**

3. What is empathy?
4. How might somebody who has a low level of empathy behave? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

**Use the articles "Cool to Be Kind" and "Me and My Habits" to answer questions 5 to 6.**

5. Name a character from "Me and My Habits" who is likely to have a low level of empathy. Support your answer with evidence from both texts.
6. Name a character from "Me and My Habits" who is likely to have a high level of empathy. Support your answer with evidence from both texts.