

Additional Resources – Reading Comprehension

Two Sides to a Coin

Read the text on the following pages and then answer the questions below.

1. Explain the word 'flitting'.

2. What does it mean to be 'Not too far away geographically'? How else might someone be 'far away'?

3. Do you think the two characters will meet? Why?

4. Find the sentence where Grace falls asleep and identify one way the author conveys that that is what is happening.

5. What does the use of the phrase 'high-definition' tell you about Ella's thoughts and how sleepy/awake she is?

6. What is the effect of stretching out the words 'relaaaaax' and 'breeeeaaathe'?

7. What does it tell you when the author writes that Grace 'inhaled' her breakfast?

8. What does the fact that the girls walk 'heads held high' tell you about how they are feeling?

9. What do the italics in the sentence 'So immature' tell you about the image the girls are trying to portray to the world?

10. Find two words used instead of 'walked' which show that Grace and her friends are confident.

11. Now that you have read the whole story, explain why the title is a good choice.

Additional Resources – Guided Reading

Two Sides to a Coin

Ella unpacked her bag for the second time. Pencil case. Notepad. Forms and documents. Everything was there, just as it had been the first time. No harm in checking, right?

She could not believe everything finally started tomorrow. Was she nervous, or excited? Really, her insides were in turmoil, flitting back and forth between the two. Ever since she had found out she was going to join Wood Lane Primary School all those weeks ago, her mind had raced from hopes to fears and back again. She could remember meeting the head teacher, Mrs. Watson, and being told that she could move right into Year Six the following September. Well, that following September was now, and tomorrow was her first day at her new school.

Not too far away geographically, but in a whole other world of experience, Grace was getting ready for bed. She too had mixed feelings about what was to come in the morning. She always got a strange, almost hollow feeling on the evenings before going back to school. It was never an all-consuming emotion, but rather just a sense that something different was approaching. It was odd to have a mildly negative feeling about school because she really enjoyed it, and in fact, there was so much for her to look forward to.

This year, at Wood Lane, she would be going into Year Six. Year Six! Top of the school! Her final year at the place where she had been for her whole education so far. How could it be that in exactly one year's time she would have a different uniform laid out on her chest of drawers ready for the morning? How would that feel?

She did not need to think too much about that now. It was time to sleep. Time to drift off into dreams of ruling the school with Sammi and Farah and teasing Caleb Howder at playtime. Time to avoid thinking too much about getting up early and trying not to talk too much during lessons with Miss Collins, her new teacher this year. Time to... forget... about... the things which...

Ella wanted to make sure she got an early night too. There would be so many new people to meet tomorrow; so many faces and names to remember! Her mother always said that an early night made your brain sharper, so she was going to follow that advice. A long, relaxing night's sleep would also make sure she did not look like a grumpy mess the next morning!

Her brain, however, had other plans. She just lay there, wide awake, for what seemed like hours. Thoughts and concerns and high-definition, anxiety-ridden scenarios whined their way into her mind like mental mosquitoes, and it was all she could do to try and swat a few of them away.

Would the children in her class like her? She knew she should not worry too much about that, but everybody wants to be liked when they join a new school.

Would the teachers and dinner ladies and teaching assistants help her out? She was painfully aware that there would be a lot of faces and places she would not know.

Would she forget something or make a fool of herself? Anything would be preferable to dying of embarrassment on her first day!

As the thoughts whirred and buzzed and her eyes stayed obstinately alert, Ella breathed in deeply and tried to calm down. Just relaaaaaax. Just breeeeeaathe.

Grace woke bright and early. Whether it was her mind worrying that she would be late on the first day back, or her heart pumping excitement around her body, she did not know. All she knew was that it was time to get ready!

Uniform: on. Hair: brushed. Breakfast: inhaled. Once her teeth were cleaned (or at least, shown a toothbrush), she managed a final check of her bag before she was out of the door in record time! Year Six! Ruling the school!

She met Sammi at the end of the road. As a special treat, they had been allowed to walk without their parents. The first sign that they were all grown up! When they walked over the railway bridge, heads held high, they caught sight of Farah waiting by the traffic lights.

Three queens of the playground, they strode through the school gates, smiling at the Year Threes, Fours and Fives who were running around like wild things. So immature.

Ella had arrived early. She had eventually fallen asleep, but she might as well not have for all the good it felt like it had done. She was so very tired. This was not how she had planned this morning to start at all. However, she was in now, and had made it to her new classroom with plenty of time to spare. Everything was ready. Was she? The children in her class began to filter in from the playground to join her.

Grace looked around for new faces as she and her entourage swept into the classroom. They took their seats at the middle table. Not too close (too geeky) or too far back (too obviously the place for troublemakers). It was time for the register. Grace settled in and waited for her name.

It was time for the register. Ella's new life at a new school was about to officially begin. She took a deep breath.

'Good morning everyone. I'm Miss Collins, your new teacher. This is my very first day at Wood Lane Primary School. Welcome to Class 6C. Welcome to Year Six!'

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Read the text on the following pages then answer the questions below.

1. Explain the word 'flitting'.

It means 'moving swiftly and lightly'.

2. What does it mean to be 'Not too far away geographically'? How else might someone be 'far away'?

It means to be not too far away in actual physical distance. One might be distant in experience (as mentioned in the text) or any number of other ways such as emotionally, spiritually, in opinion etc.

3. Do you think the two characters will meet? Why?

Yes, because both of them are starting Year Six at Wood Lane Primary School.

4. Find the sentence where Grace falls asleep and identify one way the author conveys that that is what is happening.

'Time to... forget... about... the things which...' Various answers including: The fragmented nature of the sentence; the use of ellipses; the seemingly random number of words in each fragment of the sentence; the fact that the sentence ends before it is properly complete.

5. What does the use of the phrase 'high-definition' tell you about Ella's thoughts and how sleepy/awake she is?

It shows that they were very clear in her mind, which in turn shows that she was very awake.

6. What is the effect of stretching out the words 'relaaaaax' and 'breeeeaathe'?

It creates a sense that the reader is sharing in the attempts to relax and slow down, as the actual words are slower and longer to read.

7. What does it tell you when the author writes that Grace 'inhaled' her breakfast?

It explains that she ate her breakfast extremely quickly.

8. What does the fact that the girls walk 'heads held high' tell you about how they are feeling?

They are confident and proud.

9. What do the italics in the sentence 'So immature' tell you about the image the girls are trying to portray to the world?

They are trying to appear very mature and older, much more so than the children in younger years.

10. Find two words used instead of 'walked' which show that Grace and her friends are confident.

'Strode' and 'swept'

11. Now that you have read the whole story, explain why the title is a good choice.

The phrase 'two sides of a coin' is used to describe two things which are very closely related despite seeming different. The story is about two very different characters in a school setting (a teacher and a pupil) who nevertheless have very similar experiences and emotions when moving towards the same event (a first day back after Summer holidays).