

THE TALE OF THE SEVEN RAVENS

... The **youths** looked into the well and thought of their father. They were afraid to go home.

Hours passed. "Where are those boys?" shouted the father angrily. "They are probably playing a game and have forgotten about the water. I wish they were all turned into ravens!" And when he looked up, he saw seven black birds flying away. The father was **shocked**. "What have I done?" he thought. But it was too late. He could not take back his words.

In time, the girl grew up and discovered she had brothers. The story of their misfortune¹ **affected** her **deeply**, and she decided to find them. For years, she searched and did not stop. She was **determined** to find them. Finally, she found their home. To enter, she needed a special key made from a chicken bone, which she did not have. The girl thought for a moment, and then took a knife and cut off one of her fingers. With it, she opened the front door and went inside. On a table, there were seven plates and seven cups. She ate and drank a little from each of them. In the last cup, she **accidentally** dropped a ring that her parents had given her.

Eventually, the ravens returned for their meal. The girl **hid** behind the door and watched. When the seventh raven drank from his cup, something hit his mouth. The raven **recognized it immediately**—it was his parents' ring. "I wish our sister were here," he said, "and then we could be free." At that moment, their sister ran to them, and **suddenly** the ravens were human again. The brothers kissed their sister, and all eight of them went home together happily.

¹ Misfortune is bad luck.

Before You Read

A. Discussion. Read this first paragraph of a story. Then answer the questions below.

1 Once upon a time, there lived a man and a woman who had seven sons. The couple wanted a daughter very much, and, eventually, they had a girl. She was very pretty, and her parents loved her very much. One day, the father needed water for the child, so he sent the seven brothers to a well in the forest to get it. Once there, though, the boys began to fight and the water jug fell into the well . . .

1. How many children did the couple have?
2. Why were the brothers in the forest?
3. What happened there?

B. Predict. What do you think happens next in the story? Read lines 7–15 on the next page to check your ideas. How do you think the story ends? Read the rest of the story to find out.

Multiple Choice. Choose the best answer for each question.

- Gist
- Vocabulary
- Paraphrase
- Detail
- Sequence
- Detail
- Inference
1. What is this story mainly about?
- a. a father who leaves his children
- b. a bad witch who lives in a forest
- c. a sister who saves her brothers
- d. magical birds that help children
2. In lines 11–12, what does *turned into* mean?
- a. changed to
- b. be interested in
- c. circled around
- d. returned to
3. What does *He could not take back his words* (lines 14–15) mean?
- a. He could not remember what he had said.
- b. He had already said the words, so it was too late.
- c. He could not find the right thing to say.
- d. He was too surprised to say anything else.
4. Why does the girl cut off her finger?
- a. so she can remove a ring
- b. because her finger is stuck in a door hole
- c. because she needs it to change her brothers back
- d. so she can use it to enter the ravens' house
5. What is the first thing the girl does when she enters the ravens' house?
- a. She takes out a knife.
- b. She hides behind a door.
- c. She eats and drinks.
- d. She sits and waits for the ravens to return home.
6. How do the ravens become human again?
- a. Their sister kisses them.
- b. They eat a magic ring.
- c. One raven makes a wish after seeing his parents' ring.
- d. They drink from a special cup that belonged to their father.
7. What lesson is taught in this story?
- a. Your parents always know best.
- b. Think carefully about what you say.
- c. Don't talk to strange people.
- d. Work hard and you will be happy.



Did You Know?

There are many folktales about animals changing into humans. In Japanese stories, clever fox spirits can turn into beautiful women to trick people.

Understanding Pronoun Reference

Pronouns are words such as *he*, *she*, *they*, and *them*, and usually refer to a noun earlier in a text. Writers use them when they don't want to repeat the same names or words over and over again. To fully understand a text, it is important to know what each pronoun refers to. Notice that pronouns match the gender and number of the noun.

The father needed water. He sent the brothers to a well to get it. Once there, they began to fight.

A. **Matching.** Read the summary of the fairy tale “Hansel and Gretel.” Then draw an arrow to the word or phrase each underlined pronoun refers to.

A poor man and his wife had two children named Hansel and Gretel. Their mother died when 1. they were young. Their father married again—to a terrible woman who became their stepmother. One day, 2. she took the children into the forest and left 3. them there. But Hansel had some bread in his pocket and dropped pieces of 4. it on the path so that they could find their way home. However, birds ate all the bread. The children were lost!

After walking for a long time, Hansel and Gretel saw a house made of chocolate, candies, and cake. They broke off a piece of 5. it and started to eat. An old woman opened the door and let them in. 6. She gave them food and let them stay in the house. But this old woman was a witch. 7. She wanted to make the children fatter so she could cook and eat 8. them!

One day, Hansel and Gretel escaped. They pushed the witch into the oven and shut 9. it. When they got home, they learned that their stepmother had died. Hansel and Gretel stayed with their father, and 10. they all lived happily ever after.

B. **Reference.** Find these sentences in the reading on pages 112 and 113. Write the word each underlined pronoun refers to.

1. She was very pretty, and her parents loved her very much. (line 3)
2. With it, she opened the front door and went inside. (lines 23–34)
3. She ate and drank a little from each of them. (line 25)

Critical Thinking Discuss with a partner. Do you think the father behaved badly in “The Tale of the Seven Ravens?”

Vocabulary Practice

A. Words in Context. Complete each sentence with the correct answer.

1. If something happens **accidentally**, it happens _____.
a. without you planning it b. because you planned it
2. If something happens **immediately** or **suddenly**, it happens _____.
a. over a long period of time b. quickly
3. If you **hide** something, you _____ people to see it.
a. want b. don't want
4. You **recognize** a person or thing you _____.
a. know b. don't know
5. If you are **shocked** by something, it surprises you—usually in a _____ way.
a. bad b. good

B. Completion. Complete the information with words from the box.

affect deep determined youths

Sol Guy and Josh Thome are modern-day storytellers who share real-life fairy tales. In one story, a poor child grows up and helps thousands of people in East Africa. In another, a successful hip-hop artist from Brazil builds community centers and helps children. These people are 1. _____ to make changes and improve lives. Guy and Thome's TV show, *4REAL*, tells these people's stories.

Each *4REAL* show takes a celebrity (an actor or a musician) to a different country. There, the celebrities meet 2. _____ who are helping others. Guy and Thome hope that the stories will 3. _____ you in a 4. _____ way. "Once you see what [these] people are [doing], you'll never think about these issues in the same way," says Thome.



▲ On their TV show, *4REAL*, Josh Thome and Sol Guy have worked with celebrities including actress Cameron Diaz, pictured here with school children in Boston, U.S.A.

Usage **Effect** and **affect** are often confused. *Effect* is a noun; *affect* is a verb. *The earthquake affected thousands of people. / The scientist studied the effect of the new medicine on rats.*