



**Inclement Weather
Resources
ELA
Grade 8**

**The Department of Curriculum
&
Instruction**

Literacy Support Parent Guide

The Gift of the Magi and Click-Clack The Rattlebag

by O Henry (1905)



In this section of the Literacy Support Guide, we're reading anchor text, "The Gift of the Magi" by O. Henry and "Click-Clack the Rattlebag" Neil Gaiman. In "The Gift of the Magi," O. Henry explores the themes of love, sacrifice, and generosity. O. Henry asks his readers to consider the following: "How does love emerge?", "Does money buy happiness?", and "What makes a family?"

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Ways to Support your Child

1. Ask your child what literary texts: "The Gift of the Magi" and the paired text, "Click-Clack the Rattlebag" are about?
2. **Parent Answer Keys**-Review written responses together

Related Media

1. Watch the following clips with your child at home. [The Gift of the Magi' from O'Henry's Full House \(1952\)](#)

ANCHOR TEXT



Name: _____

Class: _____

The Gift of The Magi

By O. Henry
1905

O. Henry (1862-1910), who was born William Sydney Porter, was an American author who wrote hundreds of short stories. He is known for his wit, wordplay, and twist endings.

As you read, take notes about the relationship between Jim and Della.

- [1] One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies. Pennies saved one and two at a time by bulldozing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one's cheeks burned with the silent imputation¹ of parsimony² that such close dealing implied. Three times Della counted it. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas.

There was clearly nothing to do but flop down on the shabby little couch and howl. So Della did it. Which instigates³ the moral reflection that life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles, with sniffles predominating.⁴



"Insomnia." by Lauren Hammond is licensed under CC BY 2.0.

While the mistress of the home is gradually subsiding from the first stage to the second, take a look at the home. A furnished flat⁵ at \$8 per week. It did not exactly beggar description,⁶ but it certainly had that word on the lookout for the mendicancy squad.⁷

In the vestibule⁸ below was a letter-box into which no letter would go, and an electric button from which no mortal finger could coax a ring. Also appertaining thereunto⁹ was a card bearing the name "Mr. James

1. a suggestion that someone is guilty of something
2. **Parsimony** (*noun*) extreme unwillingness to spend money; cheapness
3. to provoke or bring about
4. **Predominate** (*verb*) to be the strongest or main element
5. an apartment that has furniture in it
6. "Beggar" can mean "someone who begs," and it can also serve as a verb and mean "to defy." In this instance, something that beggars description is something that is so strange or extraordinary that it cannot be described. The author uses "beggar description" in the negative here: in other words, the apartment is not especially strange or extraordinary.
7. A mendicancy squad was a group of police who arrested beggars and homeless people.
8. a room just inside the main doors of a building; often called a "lobby"

Dillingham Young.”

- [5] The “Dillingham” had been flung to the breeze during a former period of prosperity when its possessor was being paid \$30 per week. Now, when the income was shrunk to \$20, though, they were thinking seriously of contracting to a modest and unassuming D. But whenever Mr. James Dillingham Young came home and reached his flat above he was called “Jim” and greatly hugged by Mrs. James Dillingham Young, already introduced to you as Della. Which is all very good.

Della finished her cry and attended to her cheeks with the powder rag. She stood by the window and looked out dully at a gray cat walking a gray fence in a gray backyard. Tomorrow would be Christmas Day, and she had only \$1.87 with which to buy Jim a present. She had been saving every penny she could for months, with this result. Twenty dollars a week doesn't go far. Expenses had been greater than she had calculated. They always are. Only \$1.87 to buy a present for Jim. Her Jim. Many a happy hour she had spent planning for something nice for him. Something fine and rare and sterling¹⁰ — something just a little bit near to being worthy of the honor of being owned by Jim.

There was a pier-glass between the windows of the room. Perhaps you have seen a pier-glass in an \$8 flat. A very thin and very agile person may, by observing his reflection in a rapid sequence of longitudinal strips, obtain a fairly accurate conception of his looks. Della, being slender, had mastered the art.

Suddenly she whirled from the window and stood before the glass. Her eyes were shining brilliantly, but her face had lost its color within twenty seconds. Rapidly she pulled down her hair and let it fall to its full length.

Now, there were two possessions of the James Dillingham Youngs in which they both took a mighty pride. One was Jim's gold watch that had been his father's and his grandfather's. The other was Della's hair. Had the queen of Sheba lived in the flat across the airshaft, Della would have let her hair hang out the window some day to dry just to depreciate¹¹ Her Majesty's jewels and gifts. Had King Solomon been the janitor, with all his treasures piled up in the basement, Jim would have pulled out his watch every time he passed, just to see him pluck at his beard from envy.

- [10] So now Della's beautiful hair fell about her rippling and shining like a cascade of brown waters. It reached below her knee and made itself almost a garment for her. And then she did it up again nervously and quickly. Once she faltered for a minute and stood still while a tear or two splashed on the worn red carpet.

On went her old brown jacket; on went her old brown hat. With a whirl of skirts and with the brilliant sparkle still in her eyes, she fluttered out the door and down the stairs to the street.

Where she stopped the sign read: “Mme. Sofronie. Hair Goods of All Kinds.” One flight up Della ran, and collected herself, panting. Madame, large, too white, chilly, hardly looked the “Sofronie.”

-
9. “Thereunto” is an archaic way of saying “to that” or “unto that.” In this case, the author suggests that there is a name card that is attached to “that,” the letter-box.
10. **Sterling** (*adjective*) being of the highest standard or quality
11. **Depreciate** (*verb*) to lower the value of something, or to cause something to seem less valuable

"Will you buy my hair?" asked Della.

"I buy hair," said Madame. "Take yer hat off and let's have a sight at the looks of it."

[15] Down rippled the brown cascade.

"Twenty dollars," said Madame, lifting the mass with a practised hand.

"Give it to me quick," said Della.

Oh, and the next two hours tripped by on rosy wings. Forget the hashed metaphor. She was ransacking the stores for Jim's present.

She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one else. There was no other like it in any of the stores, and she had turned all of them inside out. It was a platinum fob chain simple and chaste in design, properly proclaiming its value by substance alone and not by meretricious¹² ornamentation — as all good things should do. It was even worthy of The Watch. As soon as she saw it she knew that it must be Jim's. It was like him. Quietness and value — the description applied to both. Twenty-one dollars they took from her for it, and she hurried home with the 87 cents. With that chain on his watch Jim might be properly anxious about the time in any company. Grand as the watch was, he sometimes looked at it on the sly on account of the old leather strap that he used in place of a chain.

[20] When Della reached home her intoxication gave way a little to prudence and reason. She got out her curling irons and lighted the gas and went to work repairing the ravages made by generosity added to love. Which is always a tremendous task, dear friends — a mammoth task.

Within forty minutes her head was covered with tiny, close-lying curls that made her look wonderfully like a truant schoolboy. She looked at her reflection in the mirror long, carefully, and critically.

"If Jim doesn't kill me," she said to herself, "before he takes a second look at me, he'll say I look like a Coney Island chorus girl. But what could I do — oh! what could I do with a dollar and eighty-seven cents?"

At 7 o'clock the coffee was made and the frying-pan was on the back of the stove hot and ready to cook the chops.

Jim was never late. Della doubled the fob chain in her hand and sat on the corner of the table near the door that he always entered. Then she heard his step on the stair away down on the first flight, and she turned white for just a moment. She had a habit for saying little silent prayer about the simplest everyday things, and now she whispered: "Please God, make him think I am still pretty."

[25] The door opened and Jim stepped in and closed it. He looked thin and very serious. Poor fellow, he was only twenty-two — and to be burdened with a family! He needed a new overcoat and he was without gloves.

12. appearing attractive but having no real value

Jim stopped inside the door, as immovable as a setter¹³ at the scent of quail. His eyes were fixed upon Della, and there was an expression in them that she could not read, and it terrified her. It was not anger, nor surprise, nor disapproval, nor horror, nor any of the sentiments that she had been prepared for. He simply stared at her fixedly with that peculiar expression on his face.

Della wriggled off the table and went for him.

"Jim, darling," she cried, "don't look at me that way. I had my hair cut off and sold because I couldn't have lived through Christmas without giving you a present. It'll grow out again — you won't mind, will you? I just had to do it. My hair grows awfully fast. Say 'Merry Christmas!' Jim, and let's be happy. You don't know what a nice — what a beautiful, nice gift I've got for you."

"You've cut off your hair?" asked Jim, laboriously,¹⁴ as if he had not arrived at that patent¹⁵ fact yet even after the hardest mental labor.

[30] "Cut it off and sold it," said Della. "Don't you like me just as well, anyhow? I'm me without my hair, ain't I?"

Jim looked about the room curiously.

"You say your hair is gone?" he said, with an air almost of idiocy.

"You needn't look for it," said Della. "It's sold, I tell you — sold and gone, too. It's Christmas Eve, boy. Be good to me, for it went for you. Maybe the hairs of my head were numbered," she went on with sudden serious sweetness, "but nobody could ever count my love for you. Shall I put the chops on, Jim?"

Out of his trance Jim seemed quickly to wake. He enfolded his Della. For ten seconds let us regard with discreet scrutiny some inconsequential object in the other direction. Eight dollars a week or a million a year — what is the difference? A mathematician or a wit would give you the wrong answer. The magi brought valuable gifts, but that was not among them. This dark assertion will be illuminated later on.

[35] Jim drew a package from his overcoat pocket and threw it upon the table.

"Don't make any mistake, Dell," he said, "about me. I don't think there's anything in the way of a haircut or a shave or a shampoo that could make me like my girl any less. But if you'll unwrap that package you may see why you had me going a while at first."

White fingers and nimble tore at the string and paper. And then an ecstatic scream of joy; and then, alas! a quick feminine change to hysterical tears and wails, necessitating the immediate employment of all the comforting powers of the lord of the flat.

For there lay The Combs — the set of combs, side and back, that Della had worshipped long in a Broadway

13. a large dog used for hunting birds

14. slowly and requiring much effort

15. **Patent** (*adjective*) obvious

window. Beautiful combs, pure tortoise shell, with jewelled rims — just the shade to wear in the beautiful vanished hair. They were expensive combs, she knew, and her heart had simply craved and yearned over them without the least hope of possession. And now, they were hers, but the tresses that should have adorned the coveted adornments were gone.

But she hugged them to her bosom, and at length she was able to look up with dim eyes and a smile and say: "My hair grows so fast, Jim!"

[40] And then Della leaped up like a little singed¹⁶ cat and cried, "Oh, oh!"

Jim had not yet seen his beautiful present. She held it out to him eagerly upon her open palm. The dull precious metal seemed to flash with a reflection of her bright and ardent¹⁷ spirit.

"Isn't it a dandy, Jim? I hunted all over town to find it. You'll have to look at the time a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on it."

Instead of obeying, Jim tumbled down on the couch and put his hands under the back of his head and smiled.

"Dell," said he, "let's put our Christmas presents away and keep 'em a while. They're too nice to use just at present. I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs. And now suppose you put the chops on."

[45] The magi, as you know, were wise men — wonderfully wise men — who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise, their gifts were no doubt wise ones, possibly bearing the privilege of exchange in case of duplication. And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But in a last word to the wise of these days let it be said that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest. O all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the magi.

"The Gift of The Magi" by O. Henry is in the public domain.

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16. burned by a flame

17. **Ardent** (*adjective*) glowing or passionate

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. Which of the following best states a theme from the story?
 - A. Your status doesn't define you
 - B. Beauty isn't everything
 - C. It's the thought that counts
 - D. Unselfish love is the greatest of all gifts

2. How does the first paragraph help develop the plot of the story?
 - A. It illustrates how rude Della is
 - B. It illustrates how independent Della is
 - C. It illustrates how expensive it is to live in London
 - D. It illustrates how concerned with money Della is

3. Irony is when something unexpected happens in the story. Explain how the ending of "The Gift of the Magi" is ironic.

4. What is the purpose of paragraph 5's discussion of the name "Dillingham"?

5. PART A: What does the term "pier-glass" mean, as it is used in paragraph 7?
- A. A section of decorative stained glass
 - B. A mirror
 - C. A window
 - D. A peep-hole
6. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
- A. "Perhaps you have seen a pier-glass in an \$8 flat." (Paragraph 7)
 - B. "...by observing his reflection..." (Paragraph 7)
 - C. "Della, being slender, had mastered the art." (Paragraph 7)
 - D. "...whirled from the window and stood before the glass." (Paragraph 8)
7. Reread paragraph 45. How are Jim and Della similar to the Magi?
- A. Jim and Della are shopping for Christmas presents; the Magi invented the tradition of giving Christmas presents
 - B. Jim and Della make great sacrifices to give each other special Christmas gifts
 - C. Jim and Della are poor, and cannot give each other what they want for Christmas
 - D. Jim and Della are deeply religious, and hold the Magi in high esteem

PAIRED TEXT



Name: _____

Class: _____

Click-Clack the Rattlebag

By Neil Gaiman

2015

Neil Gaiman is British-born fiction writer who has written novels, comics, graphic novels, nonfiction and screenplays. His work has received various awards including a 2009 Newbery award. "Click-Clack the Rattlebag" is included in a collection of short stories titled Trigger Warning: Short Fictions and Disturbances.

As you read, keep track of the characters' feelings of fear and discomfort.

[1] "Before you take me up to bed, will you tell me a story?"

"Do you actually need me to take you up to bed?" I asked the boy.

He thought for a moment. Then, with intense seriousness, "Yes, actually I think you do. It's because of, I've finished my homework, and so it's my bedtime, and I am a bit scared. Not very scared. Just a bit. But it is a very big house, and lots of times the lights don't work and it's a sort of dark."

I reached over and tousled¹ his hair.

[5] "I can understand that," I said. "It is a very big old house." He nodded. We were in the kitchen, where it was light and warm. I put down my magazine on the kitchen table. "What kind of story would you like me to tell you?"

"Well," he said, thoughtfully. "I don't think it should be too scary, because then when I go up to bed, I will just be thinking about monsters the whole time. But if it isn't just a little bit scary then I won't be interested. And you make up scary stories, don't you? I know she says that's what you do."

"She exaggerates. I write stories, yes. Nothing that's been published, yet, though. And I write lots of different kinds of stories."

"But you do write scary stories?"



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1. **Tousle** (*verb*) to make something, especially a person's hair, untidy

"Yes."

[10] The boy looked up at me from the shadows by the door, where he was waiting. "Do you know any stories about Click-Clack the Rattlebag?"

"I don't think so."

"Those are the best sorts of stories."

"Do they tell them at your school?"

He shrugged. "Sometimes."

[15] "What's a Click-Clack the Rattlebag story?"

He was a precocious² child, and was unimpressed by his sister's boyfriend's ignorance. You could see it on his face. "Everybody knows them."

"I don't," I said, trying not to smile.

He looked at me as if he was trying to decide whether or not I was pulling his leg. He said, "I think maybe you should take me up to my bedroom, and then you can tell me a story before I go to sleep, but a very not-scary story because I'll be up in my bedroom then, and it's actually a bit dark up there, too."

I said, "Shall I leave a note for your sister, telling her where we are?"

[20] "You can. But you'll hear when they get back. The front door is very slammy."

We walked out of the warm and cosy kitchen into the hallway of the big house, where it was chilly and draughty and dark. I flicked the light-switch, but nothing happened.

"The bulb's gone," the boy said. "That always happens."

Our eyes adjusted to the shadows. The moon was almost full, and blue-white moonlight shone in through the high windows on the staircase, down into the hall. "We'll be all right," I said.

"Yes," said the boy, soberly. "I am very glad you're here." He seemed less precocious now. His hand found mine, and he held on to my fingers comfortably, trustingly, as if he'd known me all his life. I felt responsible and adult. I did not know if the feeling I had for his sister, who was my girlfriend, was love, not yet, but I liked that the child treated me as one of the family. I felt like his big brother, and I stood taller, and if there was something unsettling about the empty house I would not have admitted it for worlds.

[25] The stairs creaked beneath the threadbare stair-carpet. "Click-Clacks," said the boy, "are the best monsters

2. **Precocious** (*adjective*) unusually advanced or mature

ever.”

“Are they from television?”

“I don’t think so. I don’t think any people know where they come from. Mostly they come from the dark.”

“Good place for a monster to come.”

“Yes.”

[30] We walked along the upper corridor in the shadows, walking from patch of moonlight to patch of moonlight. It really was a big house. I wished I had a flashlight.

“They come from the dark,” said the boy, holding on to my hand. “I think probably they’re made of dark. And they come in when you don’t pay attention. That’s when they come in. And then they take you back to their... not nests. What’s a word that’s like nests, but not?”

“House?”

“No. It’s not a house.”

“Lair?”

[35] He was silent. Then, “I think that’s the word, yes. Lair.” He squeezed my hand. He stopped talking.

“Right. So they take the people who don’t pay attention back to their lair. And what do they do then, your monsters? Do they suck all the blood out of you, like vampires?”

He snorted. “Vampires don’t suck all the blood out of you. They only drink a little bit. Just to keep them going, and, you know, flying around. Click-Clacks are much scarier than vampires.”

“I’m not scared of vampires,” I told him.

“Me neither. I’m not scared of vampires either. Do you want to know what Click-Clacks do? They drink you,” said the boy.

[40] “Like a Coke?”

“Coke is very bad for you,” said the boy. “If you put a tooth in Coke, in the morning, it will be dissolved into nothing. That’s how bad coke is for you and why you must always clean your teeth, every night.”

I’d heard the Coke story as a boy, and had been told, as an adult, that it wasn’t true, but was certain that a lie which promoted dental hygiene was a good lie, and I let it pass.

“Click-Clacks drink you,” said the boy. “First they bite you, and then you go all *ishy* inside, and all your meat and all your brains and everything except your bones and your skin turns into a wet, milk-shakey stuff and then the Click-Clack sucks it out through the holes where your eyes used to be.”

"That's disgusting," I told him. "Did you make it up?"

[45] We'd reached the last flight of stairs, all the way in to the big house.

"No."

"I can't believe you kids make up stuff like that."

"You didn't ask me about the rattlebag," he said.

"Right. What's the rattlebag?"

[50] "Well," he said, sagely, soberly, a small voice from the darkness beside me, "once you're just bones and skin, they hang you up on a hook, and you rattle in the wind."

"So what do these Click-Clacks look like?" Even as I asked him, I wished I could take the question back, and leave it unasked. I thought: Huge spidery creatures. Like the one in the shower that morning. I'm afraid of spiders.

I was relieved when the boy said, "They look like what you aren't expecting. What you aren't paying attention to."

We were climbing wooden steps now. I held on to the railing on my left, held his hand with my right, as he walked beside me. It smelled like dust and old wood, that high in the house. The boy's tread was certain, though, even though the moonlight was scarce.

"Do you know what story you're going to tell me, to put me to bed?" he asked. "It doesn't actually have to be scary."

[55] "Not really."

"Maybe you could tell me about this evening. Tell me what you did?"

"That won't make much of a story for you. My girlfriend just moved in to a new place on the edge of town. She inherited it from an aunt or someone. It's very big and very old. I'm going to spend my first night with her, tonight, so I've been waiting for an hour or so for her and her housemates to come back with the wine and an Indian takeaway."

"See?" said the boy. There was that precocious amusement again. But all kids can be insufferable sometimes, when they think they know something you don't. It's probably good for them. "You know all that. But you don't think. You just let your brain fill in the gaps."

He pushed open the door to the attic room. It was perfectly dark, now, but the opening door disturbed the air, and I heard things rattle gently, like dry bones in thin bags, in the slight wind. Click. Clack. Click. Clack. Like that.

[60] I would have pulled away, then, if I could, but small, firm fingers pulled me forward, unrelentingly, into the dark.

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. Which statement best describes a theme within the story?
 - A. Beware of large old homes.
 - B. Do not leave children with strangers.
 - C. Things are not always what they seem.
 - D. Always tell young children bedtime stories.

2. How does the line "We walked out of the warm and cosy kitchen into the hallway of the big house, where it was chilly and draughty and dark" (Paragraph 21) help develop suspense in the story?
 - A. It hints at how the author's tone changes.
 - B. It marks a change in the narrator's mood.
 - C. It confirms that danger is ahead of them.
 - D. It describes a change in the atmosphere.

3. What does the word unsettling mean, as used in Paragraph 24?
 - A. annoying
 - B. miserable
 - C. confusing
 - D. uncomfortable

4. Which piece of evidence best supports the idea that the narrator was possibly near or around a Click-Clack?
 - A. "We were climbing wooden steps now." (Paragraph 53)
 - B. "There was that precocious amusement again." (Paragraph 58)
 - C. "He pushed open the door to the attic room." (Paragraph 59)
 - D. "I heard things rattle gently, like dry bones in thin bags"(Paragraph 59)

5. Analyze how the author develops the characters' different points of view in order to build suspense throughout the story.

ANSWER KEYS



Text

Paired Texts

Related Media

Answer key

Parent Guide

Answer key > The Gift of The Magi

by O. Henry ● 1905

1. Which of the following best states a theme from the story?

8.RL.KID.2 ^

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary.

- A. Your status doesn't define you
- B. Beauty isn't everything
- C. It's the thought that counts
- D. **Unselfish love is the greatest of all gifts**

2. How does the first paragraph help develop the plot of the story?

8.RL.CS.5 ^

Compare and contrast the structure of two or more texts and analyze how the differing structure of each text contributes to its meaning and style.

- A. It illustrates how rude Della is
- B. It illustrates how independent Della is
- C. It illustrates how expensive it is to live in London
- D. **It illustrates how concerned with money Della is**

3. Irony is when something unexpected happens in the story. Explain how the ending of "The Gift of the Magi" is ironic.

8.RL.CS.5 ^

Compare and contrast the structure of two or more texts and analyze how the differing structure of each text contributes to its meaning and style.

Answers will vary. Students should begin by pointing out that Jim and Della buy gifts to embellish or enhance each other's most prized possessions—combs for Della's hair, and a chain for Jim's pocket watch. The irony in this situation is that each person has sacrificed their most treasured possessions for the other's gift.

4. What is the purpose of paragraph 5's discussion of the name "Dillingham"?

8.RL.CS.5 ^

Compare and contrast the structure of two or more texts and analyze how the dif. structure of each text contributes to its meaning and style.

Help

Answers will vary. Students should note that Jim used to make more money (\$30 per week) than he does now (\$20 per week), and so Jim and Della have fallen on hard times. The "Dillingham" name, shared by Jim and Della because they are married, is treated as a strong and noble title. Now that their income is smaller, they consider shortening the "Dillingham" to simply "D."—a symbol of their more modest social position, and also an indication of how important names are in their society.

5. PART A: What does the term "pier-glass" mean, as it is used in paragraph 7? **8.RL.CS.4** ^

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including allusions to other texts, repetition of words and phrases, and analogies.

- A. A section of decorative stained glass
- B. A mirror**
- C. A window
- D. A peep-hole

6. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A? **8.RL.KID.1** ^

Analyze what a text says explicitly and draw logical inferences; support an interpretation of a text by citing relevant textual evidence.

- A. "Perhaps you have seen a pier-glass in an \$8 flat." (Paragraph 7)
- B. "...by observing his reflection..." (Paragraph 7)**
- C. "Della, being slender, had mastered the art." (Paragraph 7)
- D. "...whirled from the window and stood before the glass." (Paragraph 8)

7. Reread paragraph 45. How are Jim and Della similar to the Magi? **8.RL.KID.3** ^

Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

- A. Jim and Della are shopping for Christmas presents; the Magi invented the tradition of giving Christmas presents
- B. Jim and Della make great sacrifices to give each other special Christmas gifts**
- C. Jim and Della are poor, and cannot give each other what they want for Christmas
- D. Jim and Della are deeply religious, and hold the Magi in high esteem

Text

Paired Texts

Related Media

Answer key

Parent Guide

Answer key > Click-Clack the Rattlebag

by Neil Gaiman ● 2015

1. Which statement best describes a theme within the story?

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- B. Do not leave children with strangers.
- C. **Things are not always what they seem.**
- D. Always tell young children bedtime stories.

2. How does the line "We walked out of the warm and cosy kitchen into the hallway of the big house, where it was chilly and draughty and dark" (Paragraph 21) help develop suspense in the story?

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- A. It hints at how the author's tone changes.
- B. It marks a change in the narrator's mood.
- C. It confirms that danger is ahead of them.
- D. **It describes a change in the atmosphere.**

3. What does the word unsettling mean, as used in Paragraph 24?

8.RL.CS.4 ^

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including allusions to other texts, repetition of words and phrases, and analogies.

- A. annoying
- B. miserable
- C. confusing
- D. **uncomfortable**

Help

4. Which piece of evidence best supports the idea that the narrator was possibly near or around a Click-Clack? **8.RL.KID.1** ^

Analyze what a text says explicitly and draw logical inferences; support an interpretation of a text by citing relevant textual evidence.

- A. "We were climbing wooden steps now." (Paragraph 53)
 - B. "There was that precocious amusement again." (Paragraph 58)
 - C. "He pushed open the door to the attic room." (Paragraph 59)
 - D. "I heard things rattle gently, like dry bones in thin bags"(Paragraph 59)
5. Analyze how the author develops the characters' different points of view in order to build suspense throughout the story. **8.RL.CS.6** ^

Analyze how similarities and differences in the points of view of the audience and the characters create effects such as suspense, humor, or dramatic irony.

Answers will vary. Students should discuss how the author builds suspense by shifting the sense of fear from the child to the adult. In the beginning of the story the boy appears scared to go up to his room, but by the end of the story the narrator is the one who is hesitant to go inside the bedroom. The story starts with the young boy asking the narrator to tell him a story before he takes him up to bed. The narrator replies "Do you actually need me to take you up to bed?" and when the boy confesses that he is "a bit scared" (Paragraph 3), the narrator responds by tousing the boy's hair (Paragraph 4). The boy's request and the narrator's response to the request gives the reader the sense that the boy is scared and that the narrator doesn't think the boy should have anything to worry about. As the story continues, the narrator describes the house using adjectives like "dark," and "old." He also describes the boy as "precocious" (Paragraph 116) implying that he appears to be mature or act older than he is. Suspense begins to build as we learn that the boy is asking for comfort; this does not seem to fit the idea of who the boy is according to our narrator.

As the narrator moves through the house with the young boy, the boy continues to tell the narrator more and more about the Click-Clack monsters. The author continues to build suspense through short moments of uneasiness from our narrator "It really was a big house. I wished I had a flashlight" (Paragraph 30) followed by moments of reassurance from the young boy to the narrator, "I was relieved when the boy said, 'They look like what you aren't expecting'" (Paragraph 52). The reader learns more about the monsters as the narrator learns more about the monsters. As the narrator becomes more uneasy or scared, so does the audience. The author builds suspense by allowing the reader to share an uncomfortable experience with the narrator. Finally, the suspense is developed at the end of the story by the narrator's fear, which is shown through his hesitancy to go into the room "I would have pulled away then, if I could" but the boy, for mysterious reasons, is no longer scared, "but small, firm fingers pulled me forward, unrelentingly, into the dark" (Paragraph 60).