

The Challenge

CCSSR1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Story Source: Public Domain, adapted by Center for Urban Education

Mrs. Bertram loved her son, but she worried about him. He was always losing things, and he did not take care of his toys or clothes. She wanted him to be more careful. She wanted him to be responsible.

She was reading a book one morning, or at least she was trying to. It was not easy to do so because Robert was in the hall playing with his drum. Suddenly the drumming stopped and Robert rushed into the room crying.

"I broke it! I broke it," he sobbed.

"Your drum?" asked his mother. "How did you do that?"

"I was beating it with the knives and--"

"With the knives!" exclaimed his mother. "Where were your drumsticks?"

"I--I--don't know," sobbed Roger.

"Have you lost them?" said Mrs. Bertram. She needed no words to know the answer. Robert's manner was quite enough. "You know, Robert, what I said would happen the next time you lost anything."

"Yes," said Robert, "You said I must give away all my toys to some little boys who would know how to take care of them."

"Yes," said his mother. "I see you remember. I will send them all to the children's hospital tonight."

"But, mama," said Robert, "if I don't have any toys to take care of, how can I learn to take care of them?"

Mrs. Bertram had to turn away so that Robert would not see her smile. "I will have to think of some other way to teach you to be careful. I will think of something, and I will tell you what to do tonight."

That night, she told him, "I have decided that there is another way you can show how careful you are. I want you to do the laundry every week for two months."

Robert looked astonished. "Boys don't wash clothes," he said.

"Sometimes," said his mother, smilingly. "Now if you do this every week for two months, I will know you have become more responsible. Being careful is part of growing up. It means you are responsible, and it means people can trust you. This is a challenge. It is something to do that is not easy. It will help everyone in the family."

The next week Robert began his work. At first, he disliked it very much. But after a while he changed his mind. He wanted to show his mother he was responsible. He not only washed the clothes, but he also folded them neatly. He kept his toys in a box where he could find them. He was careful with everything.

The day when his two months would be up was Christmas Day. Imagine Roger's delight when he saw he had a new coat, a video game and a new drum and drumsticks. On them was a note: "For Robert, who is very responsible." He felt proud.

Write your answers to these questions on another page.

1. Sequence: Which event happened first? Which happened last?
2. Character Traits: Name one character. What is one trait you infer that character has? Explain why you think that.
3. Motive: What is something that person does? Why do you think that person does that?
4. Summarize: Summarize the story in four sentences. Tell about the characters and what they do.
5. Main Idea: What do you think is the main idea of the story? Why?