

Jumping Bodies

By ReadWorks



This is the story of how I convinced my best friend I could jump bodies.

The first time it happened, I was sitting in Ms. Perry’s sixth grade English class. We were reading a story about a man who had died but still believed he was alive. It was supposed to be a metaphor for something or other. Ms. Perry was going on and on about the differences between metaphors and similes and how to look for them in books, but I stopped paying attention the moment I heard her say, “The key to finding a metaphor is....”

It wasn’t that I was incapable of focusing, but I had noticed a small crack in the window next to my desk. The crack ran the length of the window, and right in the center, it splintered into a giant spider’s web of shattered glass. I was wondering how it had happened. We were on the fourth floor, and it seemed unlikely that any sixth or seventh grader could throw a rock that high and actually hit the window. After all, we weren’t known for our athletic abilities at this school. I was thinking about all of the various possibilities—a bird, or maybe a freak accident—when suddenly I was staring at my classmates with my back against the chalkboard.

“I wonder if I left the stove on,” I heard a small voice question from within my head. Then I saw a kitchen with a black and white tiled floor. I saw a hand reach out and switch the oven off. I didn’t recognize the kitchen, and it certainly wasn’t my hand. The fingernails were painted a dark cranberry color and the veins bulged out from underneath thin, brittle skin.

“Is everything alright, Ms. Perry?” I heard Charlotte ask. She was looking right at me. I felt cold and weak, like my knees might give.

Then, that was it. I was back in my body, sitting at my desk with a pencil in my hand. I was so surprised I almost fell out of my chair. Sammy, my best friend, nudged me. “Charles, you OK?” he whispered. “You look like you’ve seen a ghost.”

“Yeah,” I muttered. “I’m fine.”

It didn't happen again for another two weeks. This time, I was in gym class. I was jogging around the track talking to Sammy. I didn't particularly want to be running. It was cold outside. A flock of seagulls was overhead, squawking loudly. I watched them soar above us. Flying was something I always wanted to do.

And then, suddenly, I was looking down at a bunch of red-uniformed bodies running in a circle. And I was immensely hungry. All I could think about was food, and getting more of it.

And then, just as suddenly, I was back in my own body.

"Sammy," I said excitedly. "What just happened the past five minutes?"

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"I mean, did I do anything differently? Did I seem normal?"

He paused for a moment. "You were just really quiet. I thought you didn't want to talk to me."

"Sammy," I said, "I just became a seagull."

He looked at me like I was crazy. "Quit it, Charles. I'm sick of hearing you lie."

I admit it: in elementary school I had been known to stretch the truth. I didn't consider it lying, *per se*, just extreme exaggeration. But this was the truth. I had just watched my classmates running around the track like hamsters on a wheel. And two weeks ago, I had stared at them out of Ms. Perry's eyes.

I placed my hands on his shoulders. "Sammy, I'm serious."

He looked at me skeptically. "Then show me," he said. "Turn into a bird."

"It doesn't work like that," I said. "I don't know how to control it. It just happens. When I'm bored. Or something. I don't know why it happens."

He snickered. "Sure, Charles. Whatever." He walked away. This wasn't going to be easy.

The next day, I got on the bus and plopped down next to Sammy.

"Turn into any birds lately?" he teased gently. Sammy was a sweet kid, the type of kid who stuck up for other kids and didn't even mind if it meant he was going to get bullied.

I stared out the window. I wasn't in the mood to explain it to him. There was another crack in this window and I wondered how it had happened. All of the windows around me seemed to be splintering.

And then, suddenly, I felt it. I knew it was coming. I was going to jump bodies again. This time I was prepared. I grabbed Sammy's hand. "Ready?" I said into his surprised face.

"What are you talking..." Sammy muttered. He didn't finish his sentence, because then we were driving the bus. I could feel Sammy in the bus driver's head with me. I could sense his panic. I watched our hands—that is, the bus driver's hands—holding the wheel. This was incredible. And that's when things began to get really weird. We were stuck.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What does the narrator of the story convince his best friend he can do?

- A jump bodies
- B find a metaphor
- C see ghosts
- D drive a bus

2. What is a conflict in this story?

- A The narrator notices a crack in the window next to his desk that splinters into a web of shattered glass.
- B The narrator sees a flock of seagulls overhead while jogging around the track.
- C The narrator is telling the truth, but his best friend does not believe him.
- D The narrator's best friend nudges him and asks whether he is OK.

3. Read the following paragraphs from the story:

"It didn't happen again for another two weeks. This time, I was in gym class. I was jogging around the track talking to Sammy. I didn't particularly want to be running. It was cold outside. A flock of seagulls was overhead, squawking loudly. I watched them soar above us. Flying was something I always wanted to do.

And then, suddenly, I was looking down at a bunch of red-uniformed bodies running in a circle. And I was immensely hungry. All I could think about was food, and getting more of it.

And then, just as suddenly, I was back in my own body."

What can be concluded from this evidence?

- A The narrator went from being in the body of a seagull to being in his own body and then back to being in the body of a seagull.
- B The narrator went from being in his own body to being in the body of a seagull and then back to being in his own body.
- C The narrator went from being in Sammy's body to being in his own body and then back to being in Sammy's body.
- D The narrator went from being in his own body to being in Sammy's body and then back to being in his own body.

4. What happens when the narrator jumps bodies?

- A The narrator recognizes the difference between metaphors and similes.
- B The narrator starts telling lies, which the people around him do not believe.
- C The narrator thinks of a story about a man who died but believed he was still alive.
- D The narrator's mind enters another person's mind and body.

5. What is the theme of this story?

- A In order to convince people of something, it may be necessary to show them rather than tell them.
- B If a person becomes known for telling lies, other people will never believe him or her again.
- C Turning the stove off after cooking is an important safety procedure that should be followed by everyone.
- D Being able to recognize the difference between metaphors and similes is more important than athletic ability.

6. Read the following sentences from the story: "It wasn't that I was incapable of focusing, but I had noticed a small crack in the window next to my desk. The crack ran the length of the window, and **right in the center, it splintered into a giant spider's web of shattered glass.**"

What does the phrase "**right in the center, it splintered into a giant spider's web of shattered glass**" mean above?

- A The crack was bigger at the edges of the window than it was in the middle.
- B The crack looked like a big spider's web in the middle of the window.
- C A spider had crawled across the window and made a web in the middle of it.
- D The window had not been cleaned for a while and was extremely dirty.

7. Select the word that best completes the sentence.

First, the narrator jumps out of his body into Ms. Perry's body; _____, he jumps out of his body into a seagull's body.

- A obviously
- B earlier
- C second
- D last

8. What happens to the narrator while he is wondering how the crack in the window next to his desk got there?

9. Whom can the narrator feel in the bus driver's head with him?

10. Read the last two sentences from the story: "And that's when things began to get really weird. We were stuck."

Explain what the narrator means by the statement, "We were stuck." Support your answer with evidence from the story.

Teacher Guide & Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 680

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2. What is a conflict in this story?

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And then, just as suddenly, I was back in my own body."

What can be concluded from this evidence?

- A The narrator went from being in the body of a seagull to being in his own body and then back to being in the body of a seagull.
- B **The narrator went from being in his own body to being in the body of a seagull and then back to being in his own body.**
- C The narrator went from being in Sammy's body to being in his own body and then back to being in Sammy's body.
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8. What happens to the narrator while he is wondering how the crack in the window next to his desk got there?

Suggested answer: Responses may vary, as long as they have a basis in the text. Some students may provide a literal response: the narrator suddenly finds himself staring at his classmates with his back against the chalkboard. Other students may infer that the narrator has "jumped bodies" into Ms. Perry.

9. Whom can the narrator feel in the bus driver's head with him?

Suggested answer: The narrator can feel Sammy in the bus driver's head with him.

10. Read the last two sentences from the story: "And that's when things began to get really weird. We were stuck."

Explain what the narrator means by the statement, "We were stuck." Support your answer with evidence from the story.

Suggested answer: Responses may vary, as long as they are supported by the text. For example, students may interpret the narrator's remark as meaning that he and Sammy are stuck inside the bus driver's head. They both jumped out of their bodies into the bus driver's body, and what makes the situation "really weird" is that the narrator cannot return to his own body as usual.