

The Shortcut

"Follow me. I know a shortcut," Danny said.

Carl held back. "I don't think that's a good idea," he said. He was used to his brother looking for easy ways to do things. Danny slept on the floor so he didn't have to make his bed. And now he had found a shortcut from the store to their grandmother's house.

They were visiting for the Thanksgiving weekend. The block around her house was familiar. It was just four blocks from the store, with a turn on one corner. Between the store and the house was a junkyard. It was a dirty place with old cars and sofas piled in heaps. There was a fence around it. But nobody seemed to own it or to care about it.

"Come on!" Danny said. "Don't be chicken!" Carl hated it when he called him a chicken. But he felt he had to keep an eye on his brother. It's what he had been doing his whole life, even though Danny was a year older.

They pushed aside a broken part of the fence and walked through the mud. Danny hopped onto the springs of a discarded bed. His foot got stuck. He had to take off his shoe to free it. Then he saw something interesting on the ground. It looked like a silver dollar, but it turned out to be just a bottle cap. Danny tossed a flat football to Carl. He filled his pockets with all sorts of finds. A piece of blue glass. A soggy picture of a dog. Four pennies. While Danny studied the ground, Carl was looking at the sky. "It's getting late," he said. Finally, they reached the other side. There, the fence was strong and high. There was no way to climb over it. So, they had to run-fast-back to where they'd started.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. The theme of this passage is

- A. watch out for danger.
- B. it is important to be kind to your brother.
- C. the value of things.
- D. taking a shortcut can be an adventure.

2. The following *does not* support the theme:

- A. Danny saw a bottle cap on the ground.
- B. The shortcut lead to a junk yard.
- C. There was no way out of the junkyard.
- D. Danny wanted to take a shortcut.

3. What is the problem in this story?

- A. The shortcut took more time than Danny planned.
- B. Danny called Carl a chicken.
- C. Carl is always watching out for Danny.
- D. Danny wanted to take a shortcut.

4. Carl seems

- A. mean.
- B. cautious.
- C. adventurous.
- D. boring.

5. What lesson does the reader learn from the story?
