

Name: _____ Date: _____

Making Inferences

Making an inference means using clues from the text to figure out something the author doesn't tell you directly.

Directions: Answer the questions or follow the directions that appear in italics to fill in the chart. We completed the first row for you.

Clues	Inference
<p>1. On page 25, Ashley explains the difference between a budgie and a parakeet:</p> <p>"Sweet Pea is a budgie," Ashley was explaining. "People think that's the same as a parakeet, but it's not. Budgies are slightly larger and much more exotic."</p>	<p><i>Why does Ashley insist that budgies and parakeets are different?</i></p> <p>Ashley believes that budgies are more "exotic" than parakeets, and this appeals to her. In her mind, it seems to be more exciting and adventurous to have an exotic bird than a regular old parakeet.</p>
<p>2. <i>Find two lines in the story that support the inference on the right.</i></p>	<p>The narrator feels uncomfortable in Ashley's home.</p>
<p>3. On page 23, the narrator and Ashley are walking to Ashley's house and talking:</p> <p>"What do you like to imagine?"</p> <p>I was a little winded from the steps, so I just shrugged.</p> <p>'Like, I am constantly imagining I can fly,' said Ashley, spreading her arms wide. 'Do you ever imagine you're flying?'</p> <p>I stopped for breath. 'I sometimes imagine I'm in a bakery.'"</p>	<p><i>What can you infer about Ashley's and the narrator's personalities from these lines? How are they different?</i></p>

Clues	Inference
<p>4. On page 25, the narrator and Ashley’s mom are talking in the kitchen:</p> <p>“Well,’ said the mom, pouring herself more water. ‘I wish I could chat, but I really have to study. Call me if you two need anything.’</p> <p>And then she left.”</p>	<p><i>What can you infer about Ashley’s mother from these lines?</i></p>

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Close-Reading Questions

"Thirteen and a Half"

1. What does the narrator mean? (interpreting text, page 23)

2. Look for other places where the narrator shrugs. What do these shrugs reveal about her? (character, page 23)

3. What is the narrator's attitude about Ashley's house? What is her attitude about her own house? (tone, page 25)

4. Why is Ashley so into the idea that Sweet Pea is a budgie? (Budgies and parakeets are actually the same thing.) (inference, page 25)

5. Compare the feelings about growing up that Ashley expresses here with those she expresses earlier in the story. (theme, page 25)

6. What emotions are the two girls feeling in this moment? Explain. (inference, page 26)

7. Has Ashley changed over the course of her half-birthday? Explain. (theme, page 26)

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Critical-Thinking Questions

"Thirteen and a Half"

1. Describe the personalities of the two main characters—the narrator and Ashley. Support your ideas with details from the text.
2. Describe the point of view from which the story is told—that is, who is telling the story? Do you think the portrayal of Ashley can be trusted?
3. Do you think Ashley's mom was right to hide the parakeets' deaths from Ashley? Explain.
4. Do you think the narrator and Ashley will become friends?

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Theme: On Growing Up

The story "Thirteen and a Half" and the poem "On Turning 10" both include ideas about growing up. This activity will help you organize information about the ideas both texts have about growing up. You can use what you write here to help you answer the writing prompt on page 27. Note: In this activity, you can choose whether to write in complete sentences or not.

"Thirteen and a Half"

1. How does Ashley feel about growing up?

2. Text evidence and commentary to support your claim:

Commentary is your explanation of WHY or HOW the text evidence supports your claim.

"On Turning 10"

To help you
analyze the
poem, complete
the activity
Poetry Analysis:
"On Turning 10."

3. How does the speaker of "On Turning 10" feel about growing up?

4. Text evidence and commentary to support your claim:

"Thirteen and a Half" and "On Turning 10"

5. Do Ashley and the speaker of the poem have similar or different feelings about growing up? Explain.

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"Thirteen"

Character Thinking Tool

The questions in this activity are about

Ashley

1. At the beginning of the story, how does Ashley feel about growing up? How do you know?

2. Something that is done "to the hilt" is done to the fullest, without limits. How does Ashley "live to the hilt"?

3. Why did Ashley's mom hide the birds' deaths from Ashley? Was it the right thing to do?

4. Is there a difference between getting older and growing up? Explain.

5. At the beginning of the story, Ashley says that at 13 and a half, "Things shift, subtly. You'll see." How do things shift for Ashley on her half birthday?

6. Is Ashley a static character or a dynamic character? Give your reasoning.

A **static character** does not change in any important way over the course of a story.

A **dynamic character** undergoes an important internal change over the course of a story.

7. Do you think Ashley and the narrator will become friends? Would you like to be friends with Ashley?

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Analyzing Poetry

Below is "On Turning 10" by Billy Collins. Read the poem a few times. Then answer the questions on the next two pages. This activity is meant to be completed in pairs, in groups, or as a class.

On Turning 10 by Billy Collins

Go to
Scope Online
to hear this
poem read
aloud.

- 1 The whole idea of it makes me feel
like I'm coming down with something,
something worse than any stomach ache
or the headaches I get from reading in bad light—
- 5 a kind of measles of the spirit,
a mumps of the psyche,
a disfiguring chicken pox of the soul.

- You tell me it is too early to be looking back,
but that is because you have forgotten
- 10 the perfect simplicity of being one
and the beautiful complexity introduced by two.
But I can lie on my bed and remember every digit.
At four I was an Arabian wizard.
I could make myself invisible
 - 15 by drinking a glass of milk a certain way.
At seven I was a soldier, at nine a prince.

- But now I am mostly at the window
watching the late afternoon light.
Back then it never fell so solemnly
- 20 against the side of my tree house,
and my bicycle never leaned against the garage
as it does today,
all the dark blue speed drained out of it.

- This is the beginning of sadness, I say to myself,
- 25 as I walk through the universe in my sneakers.
It is time to say good-bye to my imaginary friends,
time to turn the first big number.

- It seems only yesterday I used to believe
there was nothing under my skin but light.
- 30 If you cut me I could shine.
But now when I fall upon the sidewalks of life,
I skin my knees. I bleed.

Directions: Work with your partner or group to answer the following questions. There are no right or wrong answers!

1 In the first stanza, the speaker says that the idea of turning 10 makes him feel like he is getting sick. But it's not a regular kind of sickness; it's "a kind of measles of the spirit,/a mumps of the psyche,/a disfiguring chicken pox of the soul." Of course, *literally* your spirit cannot get measles, your psyche cannot get mumps, your soul cannot get the chicken pox. So what do you think the speaker means?

2 Look at the first two lines of the second stanza. Who do you think the "you" is? What makes you think so?

3 What does the speaker mean by "You tell me it is too early to be looking back" in line 8?

4 To describe being one, the speaker uses the phrase "perfect simplicity." In line 11, what phrase does the speaker use to describe being two?

5 What do you notice about these two phrases?

6 Think about what the speaker says in lines 13-16. Clearly, he was never literally a wizard with the ability to turn invisible; he was never literally a soldier or a prince. So what does he mean?

7 In lines 17-18, the speaker says that now he is "... mostly at the window/watching the late afternoon light." Why might the poet have chosen to mention late afternoon light rather than the light at some other part of the day?

8 In lines 19-20, the speaker says that when he was younger, the late afternoon light "... never fell so solemnly/against the side of my tree house" as it does now. The sun doesn't change, though—so what has changed?

9 Consider the figurative language in lines 21-23. What do you think the speaker means when he says that the dark blue speed is drained out of his bicycle?

10 In lines 24-27, the speaker talks about saying goodbye to his imaginary friends. How does he feel about saying goodbye to them? How do you know?

11 What idea or ideas is the speaker expressing in the last stanza of the poem? Explain.

Big Ideas

12 How would the speaker complete the following sentences? Explain your answer.

Childhood means . . .

Adulthood means . . .

13 What does the speaker suggest about the role that imagination and creativity play in our lives when we are young compared with the role they play as we get older? Do you agree with him?

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“Thirteen and a Half” Quiz

Directions: Read “Thirteen and a Half.” Then answer the questions below.

1. On page 23, Ashley says that she likes to live life “to the hilt.” What does the expression “to the hilt” mean?
 - (A) in a quiet and peaceful way
 - (B) dangerously
 - (C) fully; to the maximum
 - (D) thoughtfully and carefully
2. Which line from page 24 suggests that Ashley’s mom is eager to get back to her studies?
 - (A) “Anyway, the woman gathered Ashley into her arms and sat down on the rug, hugging her.”
 - (B) “Her mom was stroking her hair, whispering ‘OK’ and occasionally checking her watch.”
 - (C) “‘Oh, sweetheart,’ said the mom.”
 - (D) “‘Ashley,’ said the mom. ‘There’s something I have to tell you.’”
3. On page 26, the narrator explains that she knelt in the dirt to bury Sweet Pea. She then says, “Usually at a friend’s house we play Ping-Pong or something.” Why does the narrator say this?
 - (A) to reveal that Ashley has never played Ping-Pong
 - (B) to emphasize the strangeness of her visit with Ashley
 - (C) to show that holding a funeral for a parakeet is not as fun as playing Ping-Pong
 - (D) to hint that she doesn’t like to play Ping-Pong
4. Which sentence best expresses a theme of the story?
 - (A) Growing up can be both exciting and challenging.
 - (B) Nothing is more important than family.
 - (C) Parakeets make excellent pets.
 - (D) Sometimes it’s kinder to lie than to tell the truth.
5. Which TWO sentences help develop the theme you identified in question 4?
 - (A) “‘But when you get older, and you can do anything,’ she whispered . . .” (p. 23)
 - (B) “‘It feels, it just feels like, like the death of my childhood.’” (p. 24)
 - (C) “‘Sweet Pea was sort of a series of birds.’” (p. 25)
 - (D) “‘Is this the worst playdate of your life?’” (p. 26)
6. How does the setting—Ashley’s large house—contribute to the story? Choose TWO answers.
 - (A) It helps establish that Ashley and the narrator are very different from each other.
 - (B) It helps establish that the narrator and Ashley have a lot in common.
 - (C) It helps establish that the narrator feels comfortable with Ashley.
 - (D) It helps establish that the narrator feels a bit uncomfortable with Ashley.

Constructed-Response Questions

Directions: Write your answer in a well-organized response.

7. The tagline of the story is “Why does everything have to change?” Explain how this tagline connects to the story. Support your answer with details from the story.
8. At the end of the story, the narrator’s mom asks her if she had a good time with Ashley. The narrator just shrugs. What might she say if she answered? Support your ideas with details from the story.

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 - (D) “‘Is this the worst playdate of your life?’” (p. 26)
6. Choose TWO statements that describe how the narrator reacts to Ashley’s house.
 - (A) It seems unusually large to the narrator.
 - (B) It reminds the narrator a lot of her own house.
 - (C) Being in it makes her very relaxed and comfortable.
 - (D) Being in it makes her a bit uncomfortable and worried she might get lost.

Constructed-Response Questions

Directions: Write your answer in a well-organized response.

7. The tagline of the story is “Why does everything have to change?” Describe the changes that happen in Ashley’s life in the story. Support your answer with details from the story.
8. At the end of the story, the narrator’s mom asks her if she had a good time with Ashley. The narrator just shrugs. What might she say if she answered? Support your ideas with details from the story.

Note: *Scope* does not accept Google Docs. If you are e-mailing your entry, please send a .pdf or .doc file.

Birthday Contest

Both the poem and the story are about growing up. Compare Ashley's attitude about being thirteen and a half with the attitude about turning ten expressed in the poem. Use text evidence. Five winners will get *Falling Over Sideways* by Jordan Sonnenblick.

Entries will be judged on:

- ⇒ a clearly stated central idea
- ⇒ good organization and transitions
- ⇒ use of supporting text evidence
- ⇒ grammar, spelling, and punctuation

My name: _____

My home phone number: _____ My grade: _____

My teacher's name: _____ My teacher's e-mail: _____

School name: _____

School address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

School phone number: _____

My parent or legal guardian consents
to my participation in this contest.

Parent's or legal guardian's signature: _____

Include this form with your written entry and send both to: scopemag@scholastic.com
or mail them to: Birthday Contest, c/o *Scope*, P.O. Box 712, New York, NY 10013-0712

ENTRIES MUST BE RECEIVED BY December 15, 2018!