Name: _____ Date: _____

Belling the Cat

Reading level 7 (3rd grade) · 224 words

In a big old house lived a family of mice. They had one terrible problem. Her name was the cat.

She crept about on soft paws. The mice never heard her until she was right there.

That night the mice held a meeting under the floor. Every mouse came, old and young.

"We must do something!" squeaked the chief mouse. "Who has a good idea?"

A young mouse jumped up. "I know!" he said. "Let us tie a bell around her neck."

"Then we will hear it ringing when she comes. We can run and hide in time!"

The mice cheered and clapped their paws. It was the cleverest plan they had ever heard.

Then an old gray mouse stood up slowly. He had been sitting quietly at the back.

"It is a wonderful plan," he said. "But I have one little question."

"Tell me this," he said. "Which of us will tie the bell on the cat?"

The room went quiet. Nobody coughed. Nobody moved a whisker, and nobody looked up.

"Not me," said one mouse, "I have a sore tail." "Not me," said another, "I am much too slow."

Every mouse had a reason. The meeting ended slowly. The bell stayed in its box.

Up on the kitchen chair, the cat opened one eye. She yawned. Then she went back to sleep.

Questions

1. What did the young mouse want to tie on the cat?

A. A bell
B. A ribbon
C. A rope

2. Who asked the question that made the room go quiet?

A. The chief mouse
B. An old gray mouse
C. The cat

3. Why did the mice give reasons instead of tying the bell?

A. The bell was too heavy
B. They were afraid to go near the cat
C. The cat was away

4. What does "clever" mean in this story?

A. Smart
B. Slow
C. Loud

5. What does this fable show?

A. Cats are fast
B. Mice should not meet
C. A plan is easy to make but hard to do

Words to know

squeaked: made a high sound
meeting: gathering to talk
whisker: stiff hair on a face
clever: smart
reason: why

Answer key: Belling the Cat

1. A. A bell
2. B. An old gray mouse
3. B. They were afraid to go near the cat
4. A. Smart
5. C. A plan is easy to make but hard to do