Name: _____ Date: _____

Goblins on Good Behavior

Reading level 8 (4th grade) · 858 words

Grub the goblin had been bad for two hundred and twelve years. He had a scratch on the cave wall for each one. Today he looked at the scratches and yawned. "I am tired of it," he said. "Being bad is hard work. You have to stomp all day and hide from people." (Do not smell this page. I am warning you now.)

Grub was the leader, because he was the loudest. His voice could shake the dust off a roof. Nibs was small, with ears like two soup spoons, and she noticed everything. Ogg was huge, and he cried when anyone stepped on a daisy. Together they agreed to be good for one week. They would start with a bake sale.

On Monday morning they marched into the town of Tumbledown and knocked on the door of Mrs. Tolliver's bakery. Mrs. Tolliver opened it with a rolling pin in her hand. She looked at the three goblins for a long time. "We have come to help," said Grub, as quietly as he could, which rattled the windows.

Mrs. Tolliver put down the rolling pin, because she was sensible. "Then you can carry the flour," she said, and she pointed at three sacks. Grub wanted to be the best at helping, so he picked up all three at once and turned around too fast. The sacks went WHUMP into the door, and white flour rose like a ghost.

When the flour cleared, Mrs. Tolliver was white from her hat to her shoes. So were the cakes, the cat and the ceiling. "Lovely," she said, in a very small voice. "Thank you. Let us try something quieter." Ogg sneezed, and a second cloud went up. That night, Nibs wrote on the cave wall, Rule One: Do not carry three of anything.

On Tuesday, the goblins sorted the cakes. Nobody told them how, so they did it the goblin way, from the stinkiest to the least stinky. They sniffed every cake. Then they took one tiny bite out of each, to check. Every cake in the shop now had a goblin-shaped hole in the side. (Still do not smell this page.)

On Wednesday they decorated. Grub took toppings out of his pockets: a button, a pickled onion, one very old gumdrop and a sock. "Fancy!" he said. Mrs. Tolliver put her hand over her eyes. "Let us put the sock back," she said, and the sock went in, a little sadly.

On Thursday, the Town Crier lost his voice. He stood on the town hall steps, ringing his bell, and nothing came out but a squeak. "Bake sale on Saturday," he whispered, and nobody heard a word. So Grub stepped up and took a huge breath. "BAKE SALE!" he roared. "SATURDAY! OR ELSE!" Every door in Tumbledown shut with a bang.

By Friday every rule on the cave wall was crossed out. The goblins sat in a row on the bench

outside the shop, looking at their feet. Even Grub had nothing to say. "We are not even good at being good," said Nibs. Ogg began to cry, very softly, and a big tear went plop in the mixing bowl.

Nobody saw it except Nibs, and Nibs kept it to herself. On Saturday morning the street was empty. Mrs. Tolliver stood behind her table of floury, bitten cakes and sighed. Then she heard a noise like a hundred feet. It was coming down the street, and it was getting louder.

It was everyone. The whole town of Tumbledown was coming to the bake sale, children running in front and grown-ups walking fast behind. "We heard there were goblins!" shouted a girl with a pigtail. "We heard they put a hole in every cake!" The line went down Main Street and out of sight.

The goblins stood behind the table in aprons, the strangest bakers the town had ever seen. Grub said "THANK YOU" so loudly that a boy's hat blew off. Nibs counted coins into a jar and never made a mistake. Ogg handed out cakes and cried each time somebody smiled.

By noon, every cake was sold, even the ones with holes. A man bought the one with the most holes, because he said it looked like a moon. The salty cake, the one with Ogg's tear in it, sold last of all. The woman who bought it came back for another. "What is in this?" she asked. "Love," said Ogg, which was almost true.

Mrs. Tolliver counted the jar twice. It was enough for the new town hall roof, with money left for the Crier's cough drops. She looked at the goblins, who were white with flour from ears to toes. "Same time Monday?" she said. Grub opened his mouth to say yes, and the whole street shook.

That night, in the cave, Grub picked up his scratching stone and looked at the wall. Every rule was crossed out. Underneath, in Nibs's careful writing, there was a new line that said, Day Six. Grub looked at it. Then he scratched one more mark and wrote, Day Seven. (You may smell this page now. It only smells of cake.)

Questions

1. Why did the goblins decide to try being good?

A. A king told them to
B. They wanted cake
C. They were tired of being bad

2. What happened when Grub carried three sacks of flour?

A. He dropped them in the pond
B. They hit the door and flour went everywhere
C. He sold them to the Mayor

3. What does sensible mean in this story?

A. Calm and wise
B. Very fast
C. Easily scared

4. Why did every door in Tumbledown shut on Thursday?

A. It started to rain
B. Grub roared a very scary announcement
C. The Crier rang his bell

5. Why did the whole town come to the bake sale on Saturday?

A. The cakes were free
B. Mrs. Tolliver had hired a band
C. They wanted to see the goblins and their cakes

6. What did Grub write on the wall at the end?

A. Rule One
B. Day Eight
C. The end

Words to know

goblin: mean little creature
sensible: wise, calm
sorted: put in order
roared: shouted loudly
apron: cooking cover

Answer key: Goblins on Good Behavior

1. C. They were tired of being bad
2. B. They hit the door and flour went everywhere
3. A. Calm and wise
4. B. Grub roared a very scary announcement
5. C. They wanted to see the goblins and their cakes
6. B. Day Eight