Name: _____ Date: _____

Kai and the Little Blue Fish

Reading level 8 (4th grade) · 646 words

Kai has a pet fish named Comet. Comet is a betta, with long blue fins that float like ribbons. He is a small fish, about two and a half inches long at the most. Kai's mom helps him look after Comet every single day. A fish needs a lot more care than people think.

Comet does not live in a bowl. A fish doctor says bettas should not live in bowls. A bowl is too small for swimming and hiding. Comet lives in a glass tank that holds five gallons of water, or more.

Bettas come from warm places, so Comet's water must be warm too. Most homes are cooler than a betta likes. Kai's mom put a heater in the tank. Kai looks at the thermometer every day. It tells him if the water has stayed warm.

Comet has a special trick. Besides gills, he has a part inside his head that lets him breathe air. Sometimes he swims up and pokes his mouth out of the water. He takes a gulp of air and swims down again.

Because Comet breathes air, the top of the tank matters. A wide tank has more top than a tall one. Kai's mom picked a wide tank, so Comet can reach the air easily. A tall vase or a bowl with a small opening would make breathing harder.

In the wild, bettas live in shallow ponds, rice fields and even puddles. The water is still and full of plants. A wild betta is dull brown or green. People bred pet bettas to be bright and colorful. Some wild ponds dry up a bit, and a betta can wait, as long as he stays wet.

Tap water has chemicals that can make a fish very sick. So Kai's mom treats the water before Comet swims in it. Kai never fills the tank by himself. The water in the tank stays calm and slow, because Comet is not a strong swimmer.

Wild bettas eat insects and the tiny wigglers that hatch into mosquitoes. Kai gives Comet fish food made of small pellets or flakes once a day. Comet gets only as much as he can eat in about three to five minutes. Then the meal is done.

Extra food sinks to the bottom and makes the water dirty. Fish can eat too much, just like cats and dogs. Kai never gives Comet a second helping. Once in a while his mom gives a special treat of bloodworms.

Comet likes places to hide and explore. His tank has plants and a small cave. Kai's mom checked that the decorations are smooth, because sharp edges can tear a fish's fins. The tank is not crowded either, so Comet has room to swim.

Comet lives alone. Two bettas in one tank would fight and hurt each other. A betta does not

get lonely like a puppy might. But he can get bored, so Kai gives him new things to look at. Kai is the one friend Comet needs.

A happy betta swims around. He comes to the glass to see you. Comet does this when Kai walks up. A sad betta lies still and does not care about anything. If Comet ever did that, Kai would tell his mom, and a fish doctor would help.

Kai washes his hands with soap after he feeds Comet. Water and things in a fish tank can have germs. Kids younger than five should not clean the tank or touch things in it. A grown-up does that job and cleans the tank in a sink that is not the kitchen sink.

Comet came from a store that Kai's mom picked with care. A grown-up decides if a family can look after a fish, and some places help fish find new homes. Ask a grown-up to look at Peabody Pets with you. You will find it at pet.peabody.kids.

Questions

1. Why does Comet not live in a bowl?

A. A bowl is too small for him
B. He likes a cold bowl
C. Bowls break easily

2. What does the thermometer tell Kai?

A. How big Comet is
B. If the water is warm enough
C. How much food is left

3. Why does Comet sometimes swim to the top of the tank?

A. To get away from Kai
B. To eat his food
C. To gulp air

4. Why does Kai's mom check that the decorations are smooth?

A. Sharp edges can tear a fish's fins
B. Rough things taste bad
C. Comet likes shiny things

5. In this book, what are fins?

A. Fish swimming parts
B. Fish eggs
C. Fish food

6. What would Kai do if Comet lay still and did not seem to care?

A. Add more food
B. Tell his mom

C. Wait a month

Words to know

betta: small tropical fish
tank: fish home
thermometer: heat gauge
gills: fish breathing parts
fins: fish swimming parts

Answer key: Kai and the Little Blue Fish

1. A. A bowl is too small for him
2. B. If the water is warm enough
3. C. To gulp air
4. A. Sharp edges can tear a fish's fins
5. A. Fish swimming parts
6. B. Tell his mom