Name: _____ Date: _____

Newt Is Nervous

Reading level 7 (3rd grade) · 323 words

Newt had one sentence to say. It was the worst job in the whole pond.

The pond held its yearly meeting on a warm day. It met on the big flat log.

"Someone must say hello to the new frogs," said Muskrat. Every eye in the pond turned toward Newt.

"Me?" said Newt, and his spots went pale. "All right, just one sentence," he said. His knees went soft.

That night, Newt practiced his sentence in the reeds. He recited it to a snail.

The snail did not respond. Newt thought that was fair. It was a snail.

In the morning, his knees would not stay still. His red spots felt hot, and his tail twitched twice.

Duck wandered by. "Are you nervous?" she asked. Duck always said the plain thing.

"A little," whispered Newt. Duck did not say, "Don't be." She sat down in the mud right beside him.

They watched a beetle crawl across a leaf. It took a very long time. Neither of them minded.

Muskrat came and sat in Newt's shade. "Once I forgot my own name," he said. "At a meeting."

"What was it?" asked Newt. "Still don't remember," said Muskrat. Newt made a tiny noise, almost a laugh.

By noon, the log was crowded. There were eleven frogs and two turtles. There were a great many eyes.

Newt climbed up the log. His mouth felt as dry as a stick. Heron stood at the front, perfectly still.

Nobody said anything. Newt did not say anything either. A fly buzzed past, and Newt counted it.

Then he looked at Duck, at Muskrat, at Heron. "Welcome to the pond," he said.

It came out small, but every single frog heard it. They clapped their wet hands together. Newt sat down so fast that the log wobbled.

Afterwards, they shared sweet cress on the log. Newt's knees were still shaking, but nobody mentioned it. Duck passed him the last piece.

Questions

1. Why did Newt have to talk at the meeting?

A. He was lost
B. He had been given the job
C. He wanted a prize

2. Who sat in the mud next to Newt?

A. Heron
B. Muskrat
C. Duck

3. What did Muskrat say he once forgot?

A. His own name
B. The meeting
C. His hat

4. What did Newt say in his one sentence?

A. Where is the log
B. Welcome to the pond
C. Good night

5. Why did the friends not tell Newt to stop worrying?

A. They were not there
B. They did not care
C. They sat with him instead

6. In this story, what does "practiced" mean?

A. Said it again and again
B. Hid from it
C. Forgot it

Words to know

meeting: a group gathering
nervous: jittery inside
practiced: tried again
cress: a water plant
reeds: tall pond grass

Answer key: Newt Is Nervous

1. B. He had been given the job
2. C. Duck
3. A. His own name
4. B. Welcome to the pond
5. C. They sat with him instead
6. A. Said it again and again