Name: _____ Date: _____

Sammy Keeps Watch

Reading level 8 (4th grade) · 509 words

Paddy the Beaver sat on the bank of his new pond and thought hard. The best aspen trees grew a long way from the water. To bring logs from there, he would have to cross open ground, and Old Man Coyote had been seen out on the meadows. Paddy did not want to be caught far from home.

He thought about digging a canal, a long straight ditch that would fill with water so he could float his logs home. But a beaver who is digging cannot look up very often. "I cannot dig and keep watch at the same time," he sighed. "Somebody would have to be my eyes."

Just then, Sammy Jay landed on a branch above him. Sammy was loud and proud and could never stay out of anybody's business. "What is a canal?" he asked. Paddy explained, and Sammy's beak fell open. He had watched Farmer Brown dig one, and it had taken days and a spade.

Then Sammy puffed out his chest. "I have the sharpest eyes in the woods," he said. "Ask anyone. I could watch for you." Paddy said it was kind, but he would not like to trouble him. Before the words were out, Sammy was gone with a flap and a squawk, and not so much as a goodbye.

Paddy blinked. "Well," he said to himself, "he did not even wait to hear the rest. Perhaps Sammy is only a talker." He felt a little sad, for he had begun to hope. He sat a while longer. Then he turned toward the aspens to look them over by himself.

Meanwhile, Sammy flew as fast as he could over the Green Meadows. He did not stop until he found Old Man Coyote stretched out in the sun, yawning and cross. Sammy watched him for a good while. A coyote lying in the sun with a full belly does not go far.

Sammy hurried back, out of breath, and landed beside Paddy. "Old Man Coyote is far off," he panted. "He will not stir all morning. You may go to your trees." Then Paddy understood. Sammy had not forgotten at all. He had gone to look.

Paddy made him a deep bow. "Sammy Jay, that was clever of you," he said. "I will feel safe with such sharp eyes on watch." Sammy ruffled his blue feathers and looked pleased. Nobody had ever called him clever for doing something kind before.

So Paddy dug, and Sammy sat in an alder and watched the meadows. Each time a shadow moved, Sammy screamed, and each time it was only a cloud or a crow. Day by day the ditch grew long and straight, and deep enough for water to run in.

When Jerry Muskrat came to visit, he laughed to see Sammy on guard. "Are you making trouble again?" he asked. "No," said Sammy proudly. "I am making a canal." Jerry looked at

the ditch and the beaver and the jay. It was wonderful, and he said so, and Sammy shone from beak to tail.

Questions

1. What did Paddy want to build?

A. A canal
B. A nest
C. A bridge

2. Why could Paddy not watch while he dug?

A. He was too sleepy
B. He had to look down at his work
C. He had no eyes

3. Where did Sammy fly first?

A. To Farmer Brown's house
B. To the Green Forest
C. Over the Green Meadows

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

A. Quick and smart
B. Very tall
C. Out of breath

5. What did Paddy learn about Sammy?

A. He only talked
B. He was a useful friend
C. He liked to dig

Words to know

canal: dug waterway
aspen: a kind of tree
trouble: bother
clever: quick and smart

Answer key: Sammy Keeps Watch

1. A. A canal
2. B. He had to look down at his work
3. C. Over the Green Meadows
4. A. Quick and smart
5. B. He was a useful friend