Name: _____ Date: _____

The Audition With the Box of Clothes

Reading level 8 (4th grade) · 661 words

Picture a room in Los Angeles in 2015. An actor has come to an audition for a TV show. A grown-up hands her a cardboard box of clothes. "Do whatever you feel like with this box of clothes," she is told. The actor is Millie Bobby Brown. The show is Stranger Things. This is how a job like that works.

The test was strange. Millie was asked to act as if she had never seen clothes. She says she did not know why. She did not know much about the part, either. She did not even know what the girl, Eleven, could do. All she had was a box of clothes and a few words from the people in the room.

She had flown to Los Angeles from England for the test. It was in June or July of that year. She says her seat number on the plane was 11. The hotel floor was 11, too. "It felt like a sign," she says. The girl she was trying out to play was named Eleven.

The answer came fast. The next day, the makers of the show, Matt and Ross Duffer, offered her the part. "Millie, would you like to be our Eleven?" she remembers them asking. She says she fell on the floor. The show came out on Netflix on July 15, 2016.

Stranger Things starts in a small town named Hawkins, in Indiana. A boy of twelve goes missing. Soon after that, a strange girl appears. She is Eleven, and Millie played her. This book is not about the story. It is about how the work gets done on a set.

A TV set is a workplace. Children who act there have special rules, and each state writes its own. Take California. Its rules say a teacher must be on set when young actors work. One teacher can look after ten of them. On weekends and school breaks, one teacher can look after twenty.

The rules limit the day. For an actor aged nine to fifteen, the limit is nine hours at the set. At most five can be work. If school is in session, three must be lessons. After the day ends, twelve hours must pass before the next one starts. Each age has its own row, and other states have their own rules.

Then there is hair. In season one, Eleven's hair was very short. For season four, filmed in 2020 and 2021, the crew made that look with a wig. It fit over Millie's own long hair. A hairstylist named Sarah Hindsgaul and her team made it. Cutting one wig down to that length took about eight to ten hours, mostly by hand.

Why a wig? A bald cap with hair on it takes a long time. The stylist said the team did not have time for that, because Millie was a minor. Tiny bits of silk inside the wig looked like skin. The show's makers would try a wig only if it took about thirty minutes.

The work was noticed. The group that gives out Emmys lists two Emmy nominations for her as Eleven, in 2017 and in 2018. An Emmy is a TV prize. Its page shows no win. In January 2017, the whole cast won a prize for best ensemble in a TV drama. The cast went on stage together.

Next came movies. In The Electric State, on Netflix in March 2025, she played Michelle. A robot named Cosmo was in the story. On set, a person named Devyn Dalton, in a special suit, played Cosmo. One of the directors, Anthony Russo, said such actors were "actually in the scenes with us."

In November 2018, UNICEF said she was its youngest-ever Goodwill Ambassador. In 2019, she visited its supply hub in Copenhagen and helped test and pack emergency supplies. Back in 2015, it had all started with a cardboard box and the words "Do whatever you feel like with this box of clothes."

Questions

1. What did the people in the room hand Millie Bobby Brown at her screen test?

A. A script
B. A cardboard box of clothes
C. A wig

2. Why did the stylist choose a wig instead of a bald cap with hair on it?

A. It looked better in photos
B. Millie asked for it
C. The team did not have time for a cap

3. In this book, what does "ensemble" mean?

A. A whole cast working together
B. A single star
C. A kind of costume

4. If a show were filmed in another state, what would the book lead you to expect?

A. The same California rules
B. Different rules might apply
C. No rules at all

5. Where is UNICEF's supply hub that she visited in 2019?

A. Los Angeles
B. London
C. Copenhagen

Words to know

audition: a tryout
wig: fake hair
ensemble: whole cast
nominations: named for prize

Answer key: The Audition With the Box of Clothes

1. B. A cardboard box of clothes
2. C. The team did not have time for a cap
3. A. A whole cast working together
4. B. Different rules might apply
5. C. Copenhagen