Name: _____ Date: _____

The Mouse Who Visited Town

Reading level 9 (5th grade) · 653 words

At the edge of a wheat field, under a thick green hedge, there was a little round hole, and in the hole lived a mouse. His name was Barley, and he was a country mouse through and through. He liked the smell of the earth after rain, and he liked listening to the crickets at night. Best of all, he liked his own cozy bed.

One bright morning, a cousin came to visit. He was a town mouse, and he looked very smart in his fancy gray coat and his polished little shoes. Barley hurried out to greet him and bowed so low that his whiskers touched the grass. "Welcome, cousin!" he cried. "You must be tired and hungry after such a long trip."

Barley laid out the finest meal he had. There were roasted beans, a handful of barley seeds and a nice dry crust of bread that he had been saving for a special day. The town mouse politely nibbled a single bean and wrinkled his nose. "Is this all you eat, cousin?" he asked. "Every day? I feel sorry for you."

"Come back with me to town," said the town mouse. "You will not believe what we eat there. Cheese, cake, cherries and honey, as much as you like, every single night. Why, you will never want to go home again!" Barley had never been to town. His heart was full of curiosity, and so he packed a few crumbs and set off.

They walked all day along a winding road, and it was dark when they came to a large and splendid house. The town mouse led the way through a crack beside the door and down a long, shadowy hall. At the end of it was a dining room where a long table stood, still covered with the remains of a party.

Barley could hardly believe his eyes. There were slices of cake with cream on top, a wedge of golden cheese, cherries in a glass dish and little sugar cookies on a silver plate. "Help yourself," said the town mouse grandly. Barley climbed up a table leg, took a big bite of cake and closed his eyes. It was delicious.

Just then, the door creaked open, and in walked a huge yellow cat. Her eyes glowed in the lamplight, and she stretched and yawned and began to look around. "Run!" squeaked the town mouse. The two mice jumped off the table and raced across the floor, and they dived into a tiny crack in the wall.

They waited there, breathing hard, until the cat grew bored and padded away. Then the town mouse brushed himself off. "That is nothing to worry about," he said, as if he did this every night. "It happens all the time. Come along, we have not had any cookies." So they crept back to the table.

Barley had just picked up a cookie when two big dogs came bounding into the room, barking at the top of their voices and skidding across the shiny floor. Once more the mice dashed for the hole. This time Barley sat in the dark with his paws over his ears, shaking from his nose to the tip of his tail.

"Goodbye, cousin," he said at last. "Your food is fine, and your house is grand, but I cannot enjoy a crumb of it. I would rather have beans in peace than cake in fear." And with that, he crept out of the crack, hurried down the road and never stopped until he saw his own round hole.

That evening, under the quiet hedge, Barley sat down to his supper of beans. The crickets sang, the stars came out, and nothing in all the world sounded or tasted quite so good. He yawned and curled up in his own cozy bed, and he slept better than he had in days. It was very good to be home.

Questions

1. Where did Barley live?

A. In a big house
B. In a barn
C. In a hole under a hedge

2. What did the town mouse think of Barley's food?

A. It was delicious
B. He did not think it was enough
C. He ate all of it

3. What happened while the mice were at the table?

A. A cat and two dogs came in
B. The lights went out
C. Someone cleared the table

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

A. Grand and fine
B. Small and plain
C. Cold and dark

5. Why did Barley go home?

A. He was angry at his cousin
B. He had eaten too much
C. He cared more about feeling safe than fancy food

Words to know

splendid: grand and fine
polished: shined until it gleamed
curiosity: wanting to know
remains: what is left over
shadowy: dim and dark

Answer key: The Mouse Who Visited Town

1. C. In a hole under a hedge
2. B. He did not think it was enough
3. A. A cat and two dogs came in
4. A. Grand and fine
5. C. He cared more about feeling safe than fancy food