Name: _____ Date: _____

The Tooth Nobody Lost

Reading level 7 (3rd grade) · 366 words

Wim had a wobbly tooth in the bottom front. He pushed it with his tongue. It tipped like a tiny door.

Then his tongue found something new, way at the back. It was big and bumpy. But no tooth had fallen out there!

"Mom, I grew an extra tooth!" said Wim. Mom looked with a flashlight. "That is your first big molar," she said.

Big molars come in behind the baby teeth. They do not push a baby tooth out. They just move in.

Wim counted his teeth with his tongue. Kids have twenty baby teeth. Now Wim had one more.

"Most grown-ups get thirty-two teeth," said Mom. "That is twelve more than kids. They come in slowly, over many years."

Under Wim's wobbly tooth, a big tooth was waiting. It was pushing up. The root of the baby tooth was melting away.

"Baby teeth have a job," said Mom. "They save a space. Then a big tooth can come in there."

That day, Uncle Hamish came over for lunch. He ate only soup. He had just had his wisdom teeth taken out.

"What are wisdom teeth?" asked Wim. "They are the last big molars," said Uncle Hamish. "They come in when you are almost grown."

"You are older then," he said, "and wiser, maybe! That is how they got the name." He patted his cheek and laughed.

"Why did yours come out?" asked Wim. "My jaw had no room," said Uncle Hamish. "They got stuck in the bone."

Long, long ago, people ate tough, raw food. They chewed and chewed. Big jaws and big teeth helped.

Now we cook our food and keep it soft. Our jaws are smaller. Sometimes the last teeth do not fit.

Some people never grow wisdom teeth at all. Some people grow them, and they fit just fine.

Gorillas and chimpanzees have wisdom teeth. Theirs fit just fine. A chimp chews tough food for almost half the day!

An alligator grows new teeth again and again. People get just two sets. That night, Wim brushed his new molar very well.

Run your tongue along your teeth. Go all the way back. Is there a big one where nothing fell out?

Questions

1. What did Wim find at the back of his mouth?

A. A loose baby tooth
B. A big new molar
C. A hole

2. Why did no baby tooth fall out to make room for the big molar?

A. Big molars come in behind the baby teeth
B. Mom pulled it out
C. The molar was a baby tooth

3. How many teeth do grown-ups get?

A. Twenty
B. Twelve
C. Thirty-two

4. In the book, what does "wobbly" mean?

A. Shiny
B. Loose
C. Sore

5. Why do wisdom teeth sometimes not fit?

A. People today have smaller jaws
B. They are too soft
C. Alligators take the room

Words to know

molar: big back tooth
wobbly: loose
root: tooth's bottom part
jaw: bone holding teeth
wisdom: being wise

Answer key: The Tooth Nobody Lost

1. B. A big new molar
2. A. Big molars come in behind the baby teeth
3. C. Thirty-two
4. B. Loose
5. A. People today have smaller jaws