Why Bears Have Short Tails
Norwegian Folk Tale

Long ago Bear had a long, thick tail. It swished as Bear walked. Animals remarked that Bear had the finest tail in the forest. This talk made Fox gnash his teeth. He plotted how to make his red, bushy tail the grandest.

Although it was a very cold winter, the stream was still flowing. Fox caught some fish and trotted off to find Bear. The fish made Bear’s stomach growl with hunger. Fox claimed that he had caught the fish in the frozen lake. Bear could do the same, Fox said. All Bear had to do was cut a hole in the ice. Then he was to drop his tail into the hole and sit on the ice until sunset. At nightfall, Bear should jump up quickly. His tail would be full of fish.

Bear did exactly as Fox had suggested. Bear’s tail tingled while he sat in the cold. As night fell, Bear tried to stand. His tail stuck to the ice. He tugged with all his strength. At last, he jumped up. Bear turned his head to look back at his dinner. He expected to see a tail full of fish, but all he saw was a short stump.

From this day to this day, every bear has a short stubby tail.

1. Who was jealous of Bear’s long, thick tail?
   a. All of the animals in the forest.
   b. The fish.
   c. The Fox.
   d. The other bears.
2. Why was fox not very nice to bear?
   a. Fox did not give bear any fish.
   b. Fox was jealous of bear.
   c. Fox did not show bear where the lake for fishing was.
   d. Fox was nice to bear and helped him.

3. What does bear do to lose his tail?
   a. Bear sticks his tail in the frozen lake and a fish bites it off.
   b. Bear sticks his tail in the lake and it freezes.
   c. Fox sneaks up on bear and cuts it off.
   d. Bear sticks his tail in the frozen lake, it gets stuck to the ice and he jumps up.
The Raft
By: Jim LaMarche

Somehow, on the river, it seemed like summer would never end. But of course it did.

On my last day, I got up extra early and crept down to the dock. The air was cool and a low pearly fog hung over the river. I untied the raft and quietly drifted downstream.

Ahead of me, through the fog, I saw two deer moving across the river, a doe and a fawn. When they reached the shore, the doe leaped easily up the steep bank, then turned to wait for her baby. But the fawn was in trouble. It kept slipping down the muddy bank. The doe returned to the water to help, but the more the fawn struggled, the deeper it got stuck in the mud.

I pushed off the river bottom and drove the raft hard onto the muddy bank, startling the doe. Then I dropped into the water. I was ankle-deep in mud.

You’re okay,” I whispered to the fawn, praying that the raft would calm it. “I won’t hurt you.”

Gradually the fawn stopped struggling, as if it understood that I was there to help. I put my arms around it and pulled. It barely moved. I pulled again, then again. Slowly the fawn eased out of the mud, and finally it was free. Carefully I carried the fawn up the bank to its mother.

Then, quietly, I returned to the raft. From there I watched the doe nuzzle and clean her baby, and I knew what I had to do. I pulled the stub of a crayon from my pocket, and drew the fawn, in all its wildness, onto the old gray boards of the raft. When I had finished, I knew it was just right.


4. What did the main character see while he drifted downstream?
5. How did the main character respond to the situation?


ER.DFA2.2.R.RL.03 Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.

Directions: Read the following stories and answer the questions.

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   c. Fox sneaks up on bear and cuts it off.

   d. Bear sticks his tail in the frozen lake, it gets stuck to the ice and he jumps up.
4. What did the main character see while he drifted downstream?

Answers may vary. Student’s answer should include the following information.

The main character saw a doe and a fawn. The fawn kept slipping down the muddy bank and got stuck. The doe was not able to help the fawn.
5. How did the main character respond to the situation?

Answers may vary. Student’s answer should include the following information.

The main character drove the draft into the mud bank and dropped into the water. The main character pulled the fawn out of the muddy bank and carried up the bank.