

Name _____

“Stray” by Cynthia Rylant

Vocabulary Warm-Up Words Lists

Word List A

abandoned [uh BAN duhd] v. tossed aside; left behind
The ghost town was filled with abandoned houses.

automobiles [AW tuh moh beelz] n. passenger vehicles with four wheels and an engine
Automobiles are expensive; it costs a lot of money to buy a car.

cough [KAUF] v. make a rough, harsh noise while forcing out air
When the nurse heard me cough, he gave me some medicine.

exhausted [eg ZAWST id] adj. very tired and worn out
Tracy felt exhausted after running seven miles.

ignore [ig NAWR] v. pay no attention to something
From now on I will ignore you when you say such foolish things.

mildly [MYLD lee] adv. gently, with little force
The wind blew so mildly that I couldn't get my kite into the air.

sipped [SIPT] v. drank slowly
Sherry gulped her milk shake down, but I sipped mine to make it last.

warehouse [WAIR hows] n. a building where things are stored
We don't have that bicycle in the store, but we'll get you one from the warehouse.

Word List B

biscuit [BIS kit] n. small, round type of bread
I'd rather have a biscuit than toast with my eggs.

distress [dis TRES] n. difficulty, pain, or sadness
Sharon was filled with distress when she saw the impossible job she had to do.

grudgingly [GRUHJ ing lee] adv. not happily, in a resentful or reluctant way
She didn't want to share and gave me a taste grudgingly.

icicles [EYE si kuhls] n. long thin pieces of ice that hang down
The spring sun started to melt the icicles hanging from our roof.

scraps [SKRAPs] n. small pieces (of food, paper, wood, fabric, etc.)
After building the bookcase, we swept up the scraps of wood that were left over.

starvation [star VAY shun] n. the act of suffering from not enough food.
Ancient peoples faced starvation if they couldn't find food.

timidly [TIM id lee] adv. shyly, in a frightened way
Dave spoke timidly since he wasn't sure that his answer was correct.

trudged [TRUHJD] v. plodded; walked slowly and with effort
The rancher trudged through the snow in search of his lost cattle.

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Literary Analysis: Plot

The **plot** of “Stray” is the arrangement of events in the story. The elements of plot include:

- **Exposition:** introduction of the setting, characters, and basic situation

- **Conflict:** the story’s central problem
- **Rising action:** events that increase the tension
- **Climax:** high point of the story when the story’s outcome becomes clear
- **Falling action:** events that follow the climax
- **Resolution:** the final outcome

All the events in a plot follow one after another in a logical way. Like most stories, “Stray” centers on a conflict or struggle. You keep reading because you want to find out who will win the conflict or how the problem will be solved. At the climax of the story, you know who wins. The problem is solved. The story ends.

DIRECTIONS: *The following questions focus on the exposition, the rising action, and the falling action in “Stray.” Answer each question in the space provided.*

1. The exposition introduces the setting, characters, and basic situation. Here is one exposition detail:

Exposition detail: Snow has fallen.

What is another exposition detail?

Exposition detail: _____

2. The events in the rising action come before the climax. There are many events in the rising action of “Stray.” Here is one event in the rising action:

Rising action event: Doris meets the dog.

On the following lines, write two additional events that happen in the rising action.

Rising action events:

a. _____

b. _____

3. In “Stray,” the story winds up quickly after the climax. Here is one event in the falling action:

Falling action event: Mr. Lacey tells Doris he took the dog to the pound.

What is another event that happens in the falling action?

Falling action event: _____

1. In “Stray,” the puppy wags its tail timidly. How does Doris behave timidly when her father sees the dog?

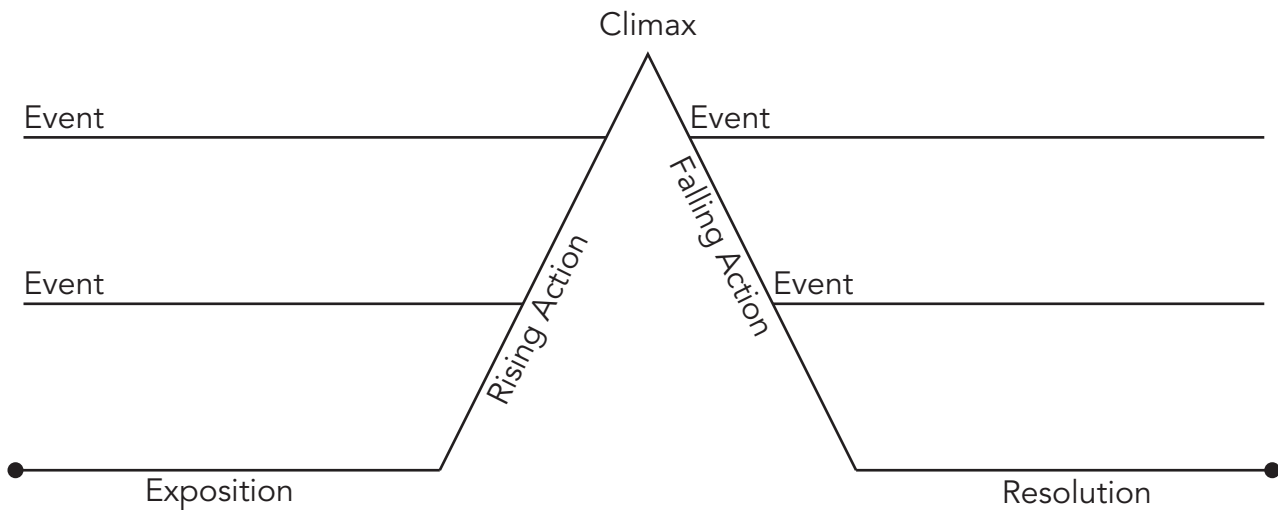
2. The author of “Stray” writes, “Mrs. Lacey grudgingly let Doris feed it table scraps.” Explain how the word grudgingly reveals Mrs. Lacey’s feeling about the dog.

3. Use your prior knowledge about how children feel about their pets. Explain how this knowledge helps you predict how Doris will feel about the stray.

4. In "Stray," why do Doris's parents ignore her when she points out how good the dog is?

5. Mrs. Lacey tells Doris to act more grown-up when the puppy has to leave. What does Mrs. Lacey want to do?

6. In the plot diagram, write two events that are part of the rising action of "Stray." Then, on the lines below, explain how each event helps in increase tension in the story.



7. When Doris cries herself to sleep in “Stray,” what prediction do Doris and the reader make about the dog’s fate? Give two examples from the story that support this prediction.

8. The falling action of “Stray” shows a different side of Doris’s father. How is he different? Why does the author wait for the falling action to show this side of him? Explain your answer.

9. Near the end of “Stray,” Mrs. Lacey smiles at her husband and shakes her head. “as if she would never, ever, understand him.” Explain her reaction.

10. Think about what the story suggests will happen to the stray. Then consider what really happens. Why does the resolution come as a surprise? Use details from the story to support your answer.
