



Benchmark 6.7

Subject: English Language Arts

State: New Jersey

Student Name: _____

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What is a boggart? Not many people know, but the Volniks—Robert and Maggie, and their children, Emily and Jessup—are about to find out that they have a boggart in their house. Read the selection to find out more about this interesting character. Then answer the questions that follow.

The Boggart

by Susan Cooper

1. The Boggart began his tricks gently. Over his centuries of mischief, he had learned not to rush things. The temptation was, of course, to dive into someone's life like a puppy running rampage in a tidy room; to turn everything upside down, all at once, in a great gleeful eruption of trickery. But that was like gobbling a whole bag of candy in five minutes. In the long run, there was much more fun to be had by taking your time.
2. So in a leisurely, temperate way, he started by hiding things. Robert left his razor on the bathroom window sill as usual after his morning shave, came back next morning and reached for it sleepily—and found it gone. He turned the whole bathroom upside down in a furious unsuccessful search, and only when he was frustrated, cross and late for an appointment did Maggie come across the razor quite by accident in the bedroom.
3. Where did you find it?
4. On your bedside table.
5. What on earth was it doing there?
6. I guess you put it there, honey. . . .
7. And the Boggart sat there listening, smiling. He would not play another trick on Robert until he had similarly removed Emily's algebra book from her bedroom desk to the kitchen vegetable rack, Maggie's favorite hat from the hallway coatrack to the upstairs linen cupboard, and Jessup's hockey stick to the basement laundry room. And in a careful patterning these tricks would be interspersed with others.
8. For instance, the Boggart enjoyed moving a chair or a lamp two feet away from its customary¹ place, so that it had to be moved back, usually by Robert, with muttered threats against the life of the once-a-week cleaning lady. If Emily tidied a bedroom drawer, the Boggart jumbled things up again. When Jessup organized all the books on his shelves alphabetically, by subject and author, the Boggart moved them into a different order overnight—using what he felt was an artistic pattern, with all the vowels lumped together in the middle of the alphabet. And when Maggie filled the sugar

bowl with sugar one day, she found next morning that it was full of salt. The discovery was rather noisy, since Robert had just put a heaping spoonful into his breakfast coffee, stirred it briskly and taken a large gulp.

9. The family reacted to all this in a satisfyingly predictable manner. At first each of them blamed himself or herself, for absent-mindedness. How could I have been dumb enough to leave that there? they would think, helplessly. But after a while they began privately to suspect that the absentmindedness belonged to someone else. It was Maggie who moved my razor, but she's forgotten. Slowly this became a mutual irritation, and as the Boggart's tricks became progressively more obvious, it grew into a conviction, in everyone's separate mind, that some other member of the family was deliberately playing practical jokes.
10. Em, I wish you'd stop changing the books on my shelves. It's not funny.
11. I haven't touched your books.
12. You must have—who else would do it?
13. The Boggart hugged himself as he listened to the spurts and flares of impatience. This was the first part of the game, the prelude. This beginning time was his private pleasure, the time in which only he knew what was really happening. Very soon they would all move to the next: to the moment when he would push them over the edge, into the delicious discovery of the real inventor of all the tricks and jokes. After that there would come a different pleasure; they would realize that they had a boggart in the house, and live with him according to the time-honored rules. He would keep them from becoming bored; they would, on the whole, enjoy him. And he would be part of the family, like a quirky² but valued relative.
...
14. So the Boggart looked ahead in happy anticipation, not knowing that he was living now in a world which no longer believed in boggarts, a world which had driven out the Old Things and buried the Wild Magic deep under layers of reason and time.

1 *customary* - usual

2 *quirky* - strange, unusual

1 What does paragraph 1 mostly suggest about the Boggart?

- (A) He has stolen candy as part of his tricks.
- (B) He has developed a method for his trickery.
- (C) He likes to play tricks quickly and then leave.
- (D) He likes to blame family pets for his trickery.

2 What do paragraphs 3-7 suggest?

- (A) The family often argues about the Boggart.
- (B) The family is unaware that the Boggart is with them.
- (C) The Boggart enjoys bringing happiness to the family.
- (D) The Boggart helps the family when items are missing.

3 In paragraph 9, what does the phrase "mutual irritation" show about how the family members react to the Boggart's tricks?

- (A) They have become suspicious of each other.
- (B) They pretend that the tricks will stop happening.
- (C) They feel that the Boggart is becoming too dangerous.
- (D) They have become determined to get rid of the Boggart.

4 What does the Boggart's reaction in paragraph 13 indicate about his mood?

- (A) He is planning to move out of the house.
- (B) He is looking forward to what will occur next.
- (C) He is beginning to regret that he upset the family.
- (D) He is hoping to find someone to help him with his work.