

“My Life and Hard Times”

By James Thurber

Multiple Choice Questions for Chapters 1-5

“The Night the Bed Fell”

1. The first sentence of this story may be best described as _____. (Look up any words that you do not know.)
 - a) anesis or humorous irony
 - b) hyperbole
 - c) satire
 - d) understatement
 - e) foreshadowing
2. Which of the following best describes Thurber’s first cousin Briggs Beall?
 - a) a light sleeper
 - b) a hypochondriac
 - c) a passive aggressive person
 - d) a violent person
 - e) a suspicious person
3. Which of the following best describes Thurber’s first cousin Aunt Grace Shoaf?
 - a) proud
 - b) paranoid
 - c) fortitudinous
 - d) choleric
 - e) stingy
4. The situation of the night is called a *gigantic jigsaw puzzle* in the last paragraph mainly because _____.
 - a) The night was a sort of mystery as no one knew what was going on.
 - b) The night was noisy and chaotic.
 - c) It was all really a game.
 - d) The dog had tried to bite Briggs Beall.
 - e) The missing piece of the puzzle was the grandfather.
5. The format of this essay is mainly _____.
 - a) argumentative or persuasive
 - b) narrative
 - c) expository
 - d) descriptive
 - e) comparing

The Car We Had to Push

6. What seemed so strange or humorous to the narrator (Thurber) about the grandfather's statement that "Zenas died of the chestnut blight in '66"?
- The grandfather knew that there really had been no chestnut blight in 1866.
 - The grandfather had previously been insisting that Zenas was dead.
 - It was a strange way to die.
 - The father had been trying to convince him that Zenas had not died and the grandfather had formerly believed him.
 - The grandfather was usually calm and collected and this was said in a moment of abrupt anger.

The Night the Ghost Got in

7. Why did the mother throw a shoe into the window of the neighbor's house?
- It was retaliation against the neighbor Bodwell for being so bad-tempered.
 - It was retaliation against the neighbor for throwing a shoe at their window.
 - She wanted to catch the neighbor's attention and urge them to call the police.
 - She was impulsive and had a mild "attack."
 - She enjoyed throwing shoes at windows.
8. How are the policemen characterized in this chapter?
- bumbling
 - uneducated
 - suspicious
 - all of the above
 - none of the above

More Alarms at Night

9. Why did Roy go to his father late at night and say, "Buck, your time has come"?
- He was attempting to get into the father's room without being noticed, but then was noticed.
 - He was actually delirious.
 - He was playing a prank.
 - The narrator (Thurber) had told him to.
 - The mother had told him to.
10. Which of the following best identifies the mother's attitude toward the father as they are characterized in this story (respectively)?
- slightly intolerant
 - very frightened

- c) somewhat patronizing
- d) extremely disdainful
- e) rather encouraging

Short Answer Questions

1. A successful essay will conjure up images in the reader's mind. Notice the descriptive details in this essay, particularly those found in describing Briggs Beall awakening out of sleep. Write down at least four different kinds of sensory words (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch) used in the description.
2. The attitude that the author takes toward his material is called tone. What is the tone of Thurber's stories? Write down a brief excerpt from the essay that illustrates tone.
3. *My Life and Hard Times* is ostensibly Thurber's autobiography, yet there are details in his stories that make the reader suspicious. Name some details of any of the stories that you have read that you think are either exaggerated or untrue.