

5- Poem Comprehension
Grade 4

First Day at School

by Roger McGough

A millionaire's day begins with
A bowl of Cornflakes splashed with milk.
A school day begins with
A million questions swimming in your head:

Will they let me take teddy?
What happens if I need the toilet?
Dinner meant lunch, but what if
I forget? And say dinner when I mean lunch?

Will everyone else know what to do
And where to go? What if I am the only one
Who doesn't recognize the bell?
Or understand a single word?

Why does the teacher wear that look
As if she is trying to remember
Where she put something? And why
Do I feel like something she forgot to put away?

1. Who is speaking in this poem? How do you know?

2. What is the child comparing at the beginning of the poem?

3. List three questions that worry the child about their first day.

4. How does the child feel about going to school? Support your answer with words from the poem.

5. What does the child notice about the teacher's expression?

6. What does the child mean by "What if I am the only one who doesn't recognize the bell?"

7. Why does the poem mention Cornflakes in the first line?

8. How does the last line make you feel?

9. Find words from the poem that mean:

- a) very rich person
- b) to know or remember
- c) swimming about

10. What is the difference between 'dinner' and 'lunch' as mentioned in the poem?

11. Make sentences using these words:

- a) recognize _____
- b) swimming _____
- c) understand _____

12. What does the phrase "questions swimming in your head" mean?

13. Find two questions from the poem that begin with 'What'.

14. Write two pairs of rhyming words from the poem. (2 marks)

15. Change these questions to statements:

a) "Will they let me take teddy?"

b) "What happens if I need the toilet?"

16. Circle the correct word:

The poem is written in (past/present) tense.

17. Draw a picture showing how you think the child in the poem feels.

18. Write about your own first day at school. How did you feel?

19. List three things you would tell a friend to make them feel better about their first day at school.

Answer Key

Comprehension:

1. A child is speaking, shown by their worries about first day of school and mentions of teddy bears and basic school routines.
2. The child compares a millionaire's morning with a school child's morning.
3. Any three from:
 - Taking teddy to school
 - Using the toilet
 - Confusing dinner and lunch
 - Not recognizing the bell
 - Not understanding instructions
4. The child feels nervous/anxious/worried, shown by the "million questions swimming" in their head.
5. The teacher looks like she's trying to remember something she misplaced.
6. The child is worried about not knowing when class periods begin or end.
7. It creates a contrast between a simple, confident morning (millionaire's) and a worried child's morning.
8. Accept any reasonable response that shows understanding of the child's feelings of being out of place.
9. millionaire, recognize, splashed
10. The child knows 'dinner' means evening meal at home but needs to remember it means 'lunch' at school
11. Accept any logical sentences using the words correctly
12. It means having many thoughts and worries moving around in your mind
13. Any two "What if" questions from the poem
14. Accept any rhyming pairs found in the poem

15. a) They will let me take teddy.

b) This is what happens if I need the toilet.

16. Present tense

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