

**8- Poem Comprehension**  
**Grade 4**

Sick

by Shel Silverstein

"I cannot go to school today,"

Said little Peggy Ann McKay.

"I have the measles and the mumps,

A gash, a rash, and purple bumps.

My mouth is wet, my throat is dry,

I'm going blind in my right eye.

My tonsils are as big as rocks,

I've counted sixteen chicken pox

And there's one more—that's seventeen,

And don't you think my face looks green?

My leg is cut, my eyes are blue—

It might be the instamatic flu.

I cough and sneeze and gasp and choke,

I'm sure that my left leg is broke—

My hip hurts when I move my chin,

My belly button's caving in,

My back is wrenched, my ankle's sprained,

My 'pendix pains each time it rains.

My nose is cold, my toes are numb,

I have a sliver in my thumb.

My neck is stiff, my voice is weak,  
I hardly whisper when I speak.  
My tongue is filling up my mouth,  
I think my hair is falling out.  
My elbow's bent, my spine ain't straight,  
My temperature is one-o-eight.  
My brain is shrunk, I cannot hear,  
There's a hole inside my ear.  
I have a hangnail, and my heart is—  
What? What's that? What's that you say?  
You say today is... Saturday?  
G'bye, I'm going out to play!"

Comprehension Questions

1. Who is the speaker in the poem? What does she want?

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2. List three made-up ailments that Peggy claims to have.

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3. What makes this poem funny? Explain with examples.

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4. How does Peggy's attitude change at the end of the poem? Why?

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5. Do you think Peggy is really sick? Give reasons for your answer.

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6. What is the "instamatic flu"? Why is this funny?

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### Vocabulary Skills

7. Find words from the poem that mean:

a) a deep cut \_\_\_\_\_

b) twisted or pulled \_\_\_\_\_

c) small piece of wood or metal stuck in skin \_\_\_\_\_

d) bent or not straight \_\_\_\_\_

8. Make sentences using these words:

a) whisper \_\_\_\_\_

b) caving \_\_\_\_\_

c) shrunk \_\_\_\_\_

9. What does "pendix" mean? Why is it written this way?

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### Grammar Skills

10. Find three pairs of rhyming words from the poem.

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11. List four verbs that describe how Peggy feels.

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12. In the line "My brain is shrunk," change the verb to present tense.

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### Fun Activities

13. Create Your Own Excuses

- Write three silly reasons why you can't:
  - a) Clean your room
  - b) Eat vegetables
  - c) Go to bed early
- Make them rhyme if you can!

14. Doctor's Report

- Pretend you're a doctor
- Write a funny medical report about Peggy
- Use some of her symptoms
- Prescribe a silly treatment

### Creative Thinking

15. Write about a time when you tried to get out of doing something. What happened?

18. If you were Peggy's teacher/parent, what would you say to her? Write a short dialogue.

## Answer Key

1. Peggy Ann McKay; she wants to avoid going to school
2. Any three from: instamatic flu, caving belly button, shrinking brain, etc.
3. Accept answers that mention exaggeration, impossible combinations of illness, made-up diseases
4. She suddenly becomes well when she realizes it's Saturday; shows she was pretending
5. No - her symptoms are impossible/contradictory and she recovers instantly when it's Saturday
6. It's a made-up illness; funny because it combines "instant" with "flu" in a child-like way
7. gash, wrenched, sliver, sprained
8. Accept logical sentences using words correctly
9. Short for appendix; written to show how children sometimes say words
10. Any three pairs: today/McKay, dry/eye, weak/speak, etc.
11. Any four: cough, sneeze, gasp, choke, whisper, etc.
12. "My brain is shrinking"