



Summer Reading Assignment for Rising 6th Graders

Student Name _____

Dear Parents,

Summer reading for rising 6th graders corresponds with the first unit of study in 6th grade, *Growing Up*. In this unit, students will explore fiction and non-fiction texts in order to answer the unit essential question: *What are some challenges and triumphs of growing up?* Over the summer, students will read two short stories and one excerpt and answer the questions below. The reading and the assignment are due by Monday, August 10, 2020. The texts are included in this document.

Directions: Read “Eleven”, “Raymond’s Run”, and the excerpt from *Peter Pan*. Select two of those stories and answer the questions in the charts below about each of those two stories. Use additional paper if needed.

Optional: *Get creative! If you choose, create a picture, make a video, or write a poem or song based on one or more of these texts.*

Choice #1 Text Title:	
Choose three important actions of characters in the story. How does each action add to the story?	
Choose one character in the story and think about his or her point of view. Do you agree with what this character says and does in the story? Explain your thinking.	
What is one of the lessons that the main character learns in the story? Provide evidence from the text to support your answer.	
Would you recommend this story to a friend? Why or why not?	

Choice #2 Text Title:	
Choose three important actions of characters in the story. How does each action add to the story?	
Choose one character in the story and think about his or her point of view. Do you agree with what this character says and does in the story? Explain your thinking.	
What is one of the lessons that the main character learns in the story? Provide evidence from the text to support your answer.	
Would you recommend this story to a friend? Why or why not?	

How do you think these two stories relate to the following unit essential question:

What are some of the challenges and triumphs of growing up?

Eleven

Sandra Cisneros

About the Author



Sandra Cisneros (b. 1954) was born in Chicago, Illinois, but her family often traveled to Mexico to visit her grandfather. The frequent moves left her with few friends, so she “retreated inside” herself by reading and writing. Cisneros has won many awards, including the prestigious MacArthur Fellowship, known as the “Genius Grant.”

BACKGROUND

Adolescence is the period of time in a person’s life between childhood and adulthood. Many experts believe that adolescence begins at the age of ten. During this time, many adolescents face peer pressure and struggle to understand themselves and their place in the world.

- 1 **W**hat they don’t understand about birthdays and what they never tell you is that when you’re eleven, you’re also ten, and nine, and eight, and seven, and six, and five, and four, and three, and two, and one. And when you wake up on your eleventh birthday you expect to feel eleven, but you don’t. You open your eyes and everything’s just like yesterday, only it’s today. And you don’t feel eleven at all. You feel like you’re still ten. And you are—underneath the year that makes you eleven.
- 2 Like some days you might say something stupid, and that’s the part of you that’s still ten. Or maybe some days you might need to sit on your mama’s lap because you’re scared, and that’s the part of you that’s five. And maybe one day when you’re all grown up maybe you will need to cry like if you’re three, and that’s okay. That’s what I tell Mama when she’s sad and needs to cry. Maybe she’s feeling three.

NOTES

- 3 Because the way you grow old is kind of like an onion or like the rings inside a tree trunk or like my little wooden dolls that fit one inside the other, each year inside the next one. That's how being eleven years old is.
- 4 You don't feel eleven. Not right away. It takes a few days, weeks even, sometimes even months before you say Eleven when they ask you. And you don't feel smart eleven, not until you're almost twelve. That's the way it is.
- 5 Only today I wish I didn't have just eleven years rattling inside me like pennies in a tin Band-Aid box. Today I wish I was one-hundred-and-two instead of eleven because if I was one-hundred-and-two I'd have known what to say when Mrs. Price put the red sweater on my desk. I would've known how to tell her it wasn't mine instead of just sitting there with that look on my face and nothing coming out of my mouth.
- 6 "Whose is this?" Mrs. Price says, and she holds the red sweater up in the air for all the class to see. "Whose? It's been sitting in the coatroom for a month."
- 7 "Not mine," says everybody. "Not me."
- 8 "It has to belong to somebody," Mrs. Price keeps saying, but nobody can remember. It's an ugly sweater with red plastic buttons and a collar and sleeves all stretched out like you could use it for a jump rope. It's maybe a thousand years old and even if it belonged to me I wouldn't say so.
- 9 Maybe because I'm skinny, maybe because she doesn't like me, that stupid Felice Garcia says, "I think it belongs to Rachel." An ugly sweater like that, all raggedy and old, but Mrs. Price believes her. Mrs. Price takes the sweater and puts it right on my desk, but when I open my mouth nothing comes out.
- 10 "That's not, I don't, you're not . . . not mine," I finally say in a little voice that was maybe me when I was four.
- 11 "Of course it's yours," Mrs. Price says. "I remember you wearing it once." Because she's older and the teacher, she's right and I'm not.
- 12 Not mine, not mine, not mine, but Mrs. Price is already turning to page 32, and math problem number four. I don't know why but all of a sudden I'm feeling sick inside, like the part of me that's three wants to come out of my eyes, only I squeeze them shut tight and bite down on my teeth real hard and try to remember today I am eleven, eleven. Mama is making a cake for me tonight, and when Papa comes home everybody will sing happy birthday, happy birthday to you.
- 13 But when the sick feeling goes away and I open my eyes, the red sweater's still sitting there like a big red mountain. I move the red sweater to the corner of my desk with my ruler. I move my

pencil and books and eraser as far from it as possible. I even move my chair a little to the right. Not mine, not mine, not mine.

14 In my head I'm thinking how long till lunchtime, how long till I can take the red sweater and throw it over the school yard fence, or even leave it hanging on a parking meter, or bunch it up into a little ball and toss it in the alley. Except when math period ends Mrs. Price says loud and in front of everybody, "Now Rachel, that's enough," because she sees I've shoved the red sweater to the tippy-tip corner of my desk and it's hanging all over the edge like a waterfall, but I don't care.

15 "Rachel," Mrs. Price says. She says it like she's getting mad. "You put that sweater on right now and no more nonsense."

16 "But it's not . . ."

17 "Now!" Mrs. Price says.

18 This is when I wish I wasn't eleven, because all the years inside of me—ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, and one—are all pushing at the back of my eyes when I put one arm through one sleeve of the sweater that smells like cottage cheese, and then the other arm through the other and stand there with my arms apart as if the sweater hurts me and it does, all itchy and full of germs that aren't even mine.

19 That's when everything I've been holding in since this morning, since when Mrs. Price put the sweater on my desk, finally lets go, and all of a sudden I'm crying in front of everybody. I wish I was invisible but I'm not. I'm eleven and it's my birthday today and I'm crying like I'm three in front of everybody. I put my head down on the desk and bury my face in my stupid clown sweater arms. My face all hot and spit coming out of my mouth because I can't stop the little animal noises from coming out of me, until there aren't any more tears left in my eyes, and it's just my body shaking like when you have the hiccups, and my whole head hurts like when you drink milk too fast.

20 But the worst part is right before the bell rings for lunch. That stupid Phyllis Lopez, who is even dumber than Felice Garcia, says she remembers the red sweater is hers! I take it off right away and give it to her, only Mrs. Price pretends like everything's okay.

21 Today I'm eleven. There's a cake Mama's making for tonight, and when Papa comes home from work we'll eat it. There'll be candles and presents and everybody will sing happy birthday, happy birthday to you, Rachel, only it's too late.

22 I'm eleven today. I'm eleven, ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, and one, but I wish I was one-hundred-and-two. I wish I was anything but eleven, because I want today to be far away already, far away like a tiny kite in the sky, so tiny-tiny you have to close your eyes to see it. 🐼

from Peter Pan

J. M. Barrie

About the Author



J. M. Barrie (1860–1937) was a Scottish author and playwright, best known as the author of *Peter Pan*. Barrie was educated in Scotland but later moved to London, England, where he formed a friendship with the Davies family. The Davies had five playful children who were the inspiration for the *Peter Pan* stories.

BACKGROUND

Peter Pan, the mischievous boy who never grows up, is one of the best-known characters in children's literature. In this beloved novel, Peter Pan and the Lost Boys live on a magical island called Neverland. Because the Lost Boys are all parentless, Peter brings a young girl named Wendy Darling to Neverland to be a mother figure to the boys.

Chapter 10 The Happy Home

NOTES

- ¹ **W**e have now reached the evening that was to be known among them as the Night of Nights, because of its adventures and their upshot. The day, as if quietly gathering its forces, had been almost uneventful, and now the redskins in their blankets were at their posts above, while, below, the children were having their evening meal; all except Peter, who had gone out to get the time. The way you got the time on the island was to find the crocodile, and then stay near him till the clock struck.
- ² The meal happened to be a make-believe tea, and they sat around the board, guzzling in their greed; and really, what with their chatter and recriminations,¹ the noise, as Wendy said, was positively deafening. To be sure, she did not mind noise, but she

1. **recriminations** (rih krihm uh NAY shuhnz) *n.* mutual accusations.

simply would not have them grabbing things, and then excusing themselves by saying that Tootles had pushed their elbow. There was a fixed rule that they must never hit back at meals, but should refer the matter of dispute to Wendy by raising the right arm politely and saying, "I complain of so-and-so"; but what usually happened was that they forgot to do this or did it too much.

3 "Silence," cried Wendy when for the twentieth time she had told them that they were not all to speak at once. "Is your mug empty, Slightly darling?"

4 "Not quite empty mummy," Slightly said, after looking into an imaginary mug.

5 "He hasn't even begun to drink his milk," Nibs interposed.

6 This was telling, and Slightly seized his chance.

7 "I complain of Nibs," he cried promptly.

8 John, however, had held up his hand first.

9 "Well, John?"

10 "May I sit in Peter's chair, as he is not here?"

11 "Sit in father's chair, John!" Wendy was scandalized. "Certainly not."

12 "He is not really our father," John answered. "He didn't even know how a father does till I showed him."

13 This was grumbling. "We complain of John," cried the twins.

14 Tootles held up his hand. He was so much the humblest of them, indeed he was the only humble one, that Wendy was specially gentle with him.

15 "I don't suppose," Tootles said diffidently,² "that I could be father."

16 "No, Tootles."

17 Once Tootles began, which was not very often, he had a silly way of going on.

18 "As I can't be father," he said heavily, "I don't suppose Michael you would let me be baby?"

19 "No, I won't," Michael rapped out. He was already in his basket.

20 "As I can't be baby," Tootles said, getting heavier and heavier and heavier, "do you think I could be a twin?"

21 "No, indeed," replied the twins, "it's awfully difficult to be a twin."

22 "As I can't be anything important," said Tootles "would any of you like to see me do a trick?"

23 "No," they all replied.

24 Then at last he stopped. "I hadn't really any hope," he said.

25 The hateful telling broke out again.

26 "Slightly is coughing on the table."

27 "The twins began with cheese-cakes."

2. **diffidently** *adv.* bashfully or timidly.

- 28 "Curly is taking both butter and honey."
29 "Nibs is speaking with his mouth full."
30 "I complain of the twins."
31 "I complain of Curly."
32 "I complain of Nibs."
33 "Oh dear, oh dear," cried Wendy "I'm sure I sometimes think that spinsters are to be envied."
34 She told them to clear away, and sat down to her work-basket, a heavy load of stockings and every knee with a hole in it as usual.
35 "Wendy," remonstrated³ Michael, "I'm too big for a cradle,"
36 "I must have somebody in a cradle," she said almost tartly, "and you are the littlest. A cradle is such a nice homely thing to have about a house."
37 While she sewed they played around her; such a group of happy faces and dancing limbs lit up by that romantic fire. It had become a very familiar scene, this, in the home under the ground, but we are looking on it for the last time.
38 There was a step above, and Wendy, you may be sure, was the first to recognize it.
39 "Children, I hear your father's step. He likes you to meet him at the door."
40 He had brought nuts for the boys as well as the correct time for Wendy.
41 "Peter, you just spoil them, you know," Wendy simpered.⁴
42 "Ah, old lady," said Peter, hanging up his gun.
43 "It was me told him mothers are called old lady," Michael whispered to Curly.
44 "I complain of Michael," said Curly instantly.
45 The first twin came to Peter. "Father, we want to dance."
46 "Dance away, my little man," said Peter, who was in high good humor.
47 "But we want you to dance."
48 Peter was really the best dancer among them, but he pretended to be scandalized.
49 "Me! My old bones would rattle!"
50 "And mummy too."
51 "What," cried Wendy, "the mother of such an armful, dance!"
52 "But on a Saturday night," Slightly insinuated.
53 It was not really Saturday night, at least it may have been, for they had long lost count of the days; but always if they wanted to do anything special they said this was Saturday night, and then they did it.
54 "Of course it is Saturday night, Peter," Wendy said, relenting.
55 "People of our figure, Wendy!"

3. **remonstrated** v. scolded.

4. **simpered** v. smiled with silliness or exaggeration.

- 56 "But it is only among our own progeny."⁵
- 57 "True, true."
- 58 So they were told they could dance, but they must put on their nighties first.
- 59 "Ah, old lady," Peter said aside to Wendy, warming himself by the fire and looking down at her as she sat turning a heel, "there is nothing more pleasant of an evening for you and me when the day's toil is over than to rest by the fire with the little ones near by."
- 60 "It is sweet, Peter, isn't it?" Wendy said, frightfully gratified. "Peter, I think Curly has your nose."
- 61 "Michael takes after you."
- 62 She went to him and put her hand on his shoulder.
- 63 "Dear Peter," she said, "with such a large family, of course, I have now passed my best, but you don't want to change⁶ me, do you?"
- 64 "No, Wendy."
- 65 Certainly he did not want a change, but he looked at her uncomfortably, blinking, you know, like one not sure whether he was awake or asleep.
- 66 "Peter, what is it?"
- 67 "I was just thinking," he said, a little scared. "It is only make-believe isn't it that I am their father?"
- 68 "Oh yes," Wendy said primly.⁷
- 69 "You see," he continued apologetically, "it would make me seem so old to be their real father."
- 70 "But they are ours, Peter, yours and mine."
- 71 "But not really, Wendy?" he asked anxiously.
- 72 "Not if you don't wish it," she replied; and she distinctly heard his sigh of relief.
- 73 "Peter," she asked, trying to speak firmly, "what are your exact feelings to⁸ me?"
- 74 "Those of a devoted son, Wendy."
- 75 "I thought so," she said, and went and sat by herself at the extreme end of the room.
- 76 "You are so queer," he said, frankly puzzled, "and Tiger Lily is just the same. There is something she wants to be to me, but she says it is not my mother."
- 77 "No, indeed, it is not," Wendy replied with frightful emphasis. Now we know why she was prejudiced against the redskins.
- 78 "Then what is it?"
- 79 "It isn't for a lady to tell."

5. **progeny** (PROJ uh nee) *n.* children.

6. **change** *v.* exchange.

7. **primly** *adv.* formally and properly.

8. **to** about.

80 “Oh, very well,” Peter said, a little nettled. “Perhaps Tinker Bell will tell me.”

81 “Oh yes, Tinker Bell will tell you,” Wendy retorted scornfully. “She is an abandoned little creature.”

82 Here Tink, who was in her bedroom, eavesdropping, squeaked out something impudent.

83 “She says she glories in being abandoned,” Peter interpreted.

84 He had a sudden idea. “Perhaps Tink wants to be my mother?”

85 “You silly ass!” cried Tinker Bell in a passion.

86 She had said it so often that Wendy needed no translation.

87 “I almost agree with her,” Wendy snapped. Fancy Wendy snapping! But she had been much tried, and she little knew what was to happen before the night was out. If she had known she would not have snapped.



88 None of them knew. Perhaps it was best not to know. Their ignorance gave them one more glad hour; and as it was to be their last hour on the island, let us rejoice that there were sixty glad minutes in it. They sang and danced in their night-gowns. Such a deliciously creepy song it was, in which they pretended to be frightened at their own shadows, little witting⁹ that so soon

9. **witting** v. knowing.

shadows would close in upon them, from whom they would shrink in real fear. So uproariously gay was the dance, and how they buffeted each other on the bed and out of it! It was a pillow fight rather than a dance, and when it was finished, the pillows insisted on one bout more, like partners who know that they may never meet again. The stories they told, before it was time for Wendy's good-night story! Even Slightly tried to tell a story that night, but the beginning was so fearfully dull that it appalled not only the others but himself, and he said happily:

89 "Yes, it is a dull beginning. I say, let us pretend that it is the end."

90 And then at last they all got into bed for Wendy's story, the story they loved best, the story Peter hated. Usually when she began to tell this story he left the room or put his hands over his ears; and possibly if he had done either of those things this time they might all still be on the island. But tonight he remained on his stool; and we shall see what happened.

Chapter 11 Wendy's Story

91 "Listen then" said Wendy settling down to her story, with Michael at her feet and seven boys in the bed. "There was once a gentleman—"

92 "I had rather he had been a lady," Curly said.

93 "I wish he had been a white rat," said Nibs.

94 "Quiet," their mother admonished¹⁰ them. "There was a lady also, and—"

95 "Oh, mummy," cried the first twin, "you mean that there is a lady also, don't you? She is not dead, is she?"

96 "Oh, no."

97 "I am awfully glad she isn't dead," said Tootles. "Are you glad, John?"

98 "Of course I am."

99 "Are you glad, Nibs?"

100 "Rather."

101 "Are you glad, Twins?"

102 "We are glad."

103 "Oh dear," sighed Wendy.

104 "Little less noise there," Peter called out, determined that she should have fair play, however beastly a story it might be in his opinion.

105 "The gentleman's name," Wendy continued, "was Mr. Darling, and her name was Mrs. Darling."

106 "I knew them," John said, to annoy the others.

107 "I think I knew them," said Michael rather doubtfully.

10. **admonished** v. cautioned.

- 108 "They were married, you know," explained Wendy, "and what
do you think they had?"
- 109 "White rats," cried Nibs, inspired.
- 110 "No."
- 111 "It's awfully puzzling," said Tootles, who knew the story by
heart.
- 112 "Quiet, Tootles. They had three descendants."
- 113 "What is descendants?"
- 114 "Well, you are one, Twin."
- 115 "Did you hear that, John? I am a descendant."
- 116 "Descendants are only children," said John.
- 117 "Oh dear, oh dear," sighed Wendy. "Now these three children
had a faithful nurse called Nana; but Mr. Darling was angry with
her and chained her up in the yard and so all the children flew
away."
- 118 "It's an awfully good story," said Nibs.
- 119 "They flew away," Wendy continued, "to the Neverland, where
the lost children are."
- 120 "I just thought they did," Curly broke in excitedly. "I don't
know how it is, but I just thought they did!"
- 121 "O Wendy," cried Tootles, "was one of the lost children called
Tootles?"
- 122 "Yes, he was."
- 123 "I am in a story. Hurrah, I am in a story, Nibs."
- 124 "Hush. Now I want you to consider the feelings of the unhappy
parents with all their children flown away."
- 125 "Oo!" they all moaned, though they were not really considering
the feelings of the unhappy parents one jot.
- 126 "Think of the empty beds!"
- 127 "Oo!"
- 128 "It's awfully sad," the first twin said cheerfully.
- 129 "I don't see how it can have a happy ending," said the second
twin. "Do you Nibs?"
- 130 "I'm frightfully anxious."
- 131 "If you knew how great is a mother's love," Wendy told them
triumphantly "you would have no fear." She had now come to the
part that Peter hated.
- 132 "I do like a mother's love," said Tootles, hitting Nibs with a
pillow. "Do you like a mother's love, Nibs?"
- 133 "I do just," said Nibs, hitting back.
- 134 "You see," Wendy said complacently, "our heroine knew that
the mother would always leave the window open for her children
to fly back by; so they stayed away for years and had a lovely
time."
- 135 "Did they ever go back?"

- 136 “Let us now,” said Wendy, bracing herself up for her finest effort, “take a peep into the future,” and they all gave themselves the twist that makes peeps into the future easier. “Years have rolled by, and who is this elegant lady of uncertain age alighting at London Station?”
- 137 “O Wendy, who is she?” cried Nibs, every bit as excited as if he didn’t know.
- 138 “Can it be—yes—no—it is—the fair Wendy!”
- 139 “Oh!”
- 140 “And who are the two noble portly figures accompanying her, now grown to man’s estate? Can they be John and Michael? They are!”
- 141 “Oh!”
- 142 “‘See, dear brothers,’ says Wendy pointing upwards, ‘there is the window still standing open. Ah, now we are rewarded for our sublime faith in a mother’s love.’ So up they flew to their mummy and daddy, and pen cannot describe the happy scene, over which we draw a veil.”
- 143 That was the story, and they were as pleased with it as the fair narrator herself. Everything just as it should be, you see. Off we skip like the most heartless things in the world, which is what children are, but so attractive; and we have an entirely selfish time, and then when we have need of special attention we nobly return for it, confident that we shall be rewarded instead of smacked.
- 144 So great indeed was their faith in a mother’s love that they felt they could afford to be callous for a bit longer.
- 145 But there was one there who knew better, and when Wendy finished he uttered a hollow groan.
- 146 “What is it, Peter?” she cried, running to him, thinking he was ill. She felt him solicitously,¹¹ lower down than his chest. “Where is it, Peter?”
- 147 “It isn’t that kind of pain,” Peter replied darkly.
- 148 “Then what kind is it?”
- 149 “Wendy, you are wrong about mothers.”
- 150 They all gathered round him in affright, so alarming was his agitation; and with a fine candor he told them what he had hitherto concealed.
- 151 “Long ago,” he said, “I thought like you that my mother would always keep the window open for me, so I stayed away for moons and moons and moons, and then flew back; but the window was barred, for mother had forgotten all about me, and there was another little boy sleeping in my bed.”
- 152 I am not sure that this was true, but Peter thought it was true; and it scared them.
- 153 “Are you sure mothers are like that?”

11. **solicitously** (suh LIHS uh tuhs lee) *adv.* carefully.

- 154 "Yes."
- 155 So this was the truth about mothers. The toads!
- 156 Still it is best to be careful; and no one knows so quickly as a child when he should give in. "Wendy, let us¹² go home," cried John and Michael together.
- 157 "Yes," she said, clutching them.
- 158 "Not tonight?" asked the lost boys bewildered. They knew in what they called their hearts that one can get on quite well without a mother, and that it is only the mothers who think you can't.
- 159 "At once," Wendy replied resolutely, for the horrible thought had come to her:
- 160 "Perhaps mother is in half mourning by this time."
- 161 This dread made her forgetful of what must be Peter's feelings, and she said to him rather sharply, "Peter, will you make the necessary arrangements?"
- 162 "If you wish it," he replied, as coolly as if she had asked him to pass the nuts.
- 163 Not so much as a sorry-to-lose-you between them! If she did not mind the parting, he was going to show her, was Peter, that neither did he.
- 164 But of course he cared very much; and he was so full of wrath against grown-ups, who, as usual, were spoiling everything, that as soon as he got inside his tree he breathed intentionally quick short breaths at the rate of about five to a second. He did this because there is a saying in the Neverland that, every time you breathe, a grown-up dies; and Peter was killing them off vindictively as fast as possible.
- 165 Then having given the necessary instructions to the redskins he returned to the home, where an unworthy scene had been enacted in his absence. Panic-stricken at the thought of losing Wendy the lost boys had advanced upon her threateningly.
- 166 "It will be worse than before she came," they cried.
- 167 "We shan't let her go."
- 168 "Let's keep her prisoner."
- 169 "Ay, chain her up."
- 170 In her extremity an instinct told her to which of them to turn. "Tootles," she cried, "I appeal to you."
- 171 Was it not strange? She appealed to Tootles, quite the silliest one.
- 172 Grandly, however, did Tootles respond. For that one moment he dropped his silliness and spoke with dignity.
- 173 "I am just Tootles," he said, "and nobody minds me. But the first who does not behave to Wendy like an English gentleman I will blood him severely."

12. **let us** let's.

- 174 He drew back his hanger; and for that instant his sun was at noon. The others held back uneasily. Then Peter returned, and they saw at once that they would get no support from him. He would keep no girl in the Neverland against her will.
- 175 "Wendy," he said, striding up and down, "I have asked the redskins to guide you through the wood, as flying tires you so."
- 176 "Thank you, Peter."
- 177 "Then," he continued, in the short sharp voice of one accustomed to be obeyed, "Tinker Bell will take you across the sea. Wake her, Nibs."
- 178 Nibs had to knock twice before he got an answer, though Tink had really been sitting up in bed listening for some time.
- 179 "Who are you? How dare you? Go away," she cried.
- 180 "You are to get up, Tink," Nibs called, "and take Wendy on a journey."
- 181 Of course Tink had been delighted to hear that Wendy was going; but she was jolly well determined not to be her courier, and she said so in still more offensive language. Then she pretended to be asleep again.
- 182 "She says she won't!" Nibs exclaimed, aghast at such insubordination, whereupon Peter went sternly toward the young lady's chamber.
- 183 "Tink," he rapped out, "if you don't get up and dress at once I will open the curtains, and then we shall all see you in your negligee."¹³
- 184 This made her leap to the floor. "Who said I wasn't getting up?" she cried.
- 185 In the meantime the boys were gazing very forlornly at Wendy, now equipped with John and Michael for the journey. By this time they were dejected, not merely because they were about to lose her, but also because they felt that she was going off to something nice to which they had not been invited. Novelty was beckoning to them as usual.
- 186 Crediting them with a nobler feeling Wendy melted.
- 187 "Dear ones," she said, "if you will all come with me I feel almost sure I can get my father and mother to adopt you."
- 188 The invitation was meant specially for Peter, but each of the boys was thinking exclusively of himself, and at once they jumped with joy.
- 189 "But won't they think us rather a handful?" Nibs asked in the middle of his jump.
- 190 "Oh no," said Wendy, rapidly thinking it out, "it will only mean having a few beds in the drawing-room; they can be hidden behind the screens on first Thursdays."

13. **negligee** (NEHG luh zhay) *n.* nightgown.

191 “Peter, can we go?” they all cried imploringly. They took it for granted that if they went he would go also, but really they scarcely cared. Thus children are ever ready, when novelty knocks, to desert their dearest ones.

192 “All right,” Peter replied with a bitter smile, and immediately they rushed to get their things.

193 “And now, Peter,” Wendy said, thinking she had put everything right, “I am going to give you your medicine before you go.” She loved to give them medicine, and undoubtedly gave them too much. Of course it was only water, but it was out of a bottle and she always shook the bottle and counted the drops, which gave it a certain medicinal quality. On this occasion, however, she did not give Peter his draught,¹⁴ for just as she had prepared it, she saw a look on his face that made her heart sink.

194 “Get your things, Peter,” she cried, shaking.

195 “No,” he answered, pretending indifference, “I am not going with you, Wendy.”

196 “Yes, Peter.”

197 “No.”

198 To show that her departure would leave him unmoved, he skipped up and down the room, playing gaily on his heartless pipes. She had to run about after him, though it was rather undignified.

199 “To find your mother,” she coaxed.

200 Now, if Peter had ever quite had a mother, he no longer missed her. He could do very well without one. He had thought them out, and remembered only their bad points.

201 “No, no,” he told Wendy decisively; “perhaps she would say I was old, and I just want always to be a little boy and to have fun.”

202 “But, Peter—”

203 “No.”

204 And so the others had to be told.

205 “Peter isn’t coming.”

206 Peter not coming! They gazed blankly at him, their sticks over their backs, and on each stick a bundle. Their first thought was that if Peter was not going he had probably changed his mind about letting them go.

207 But he was far too proud for that. “If you find your mothers,” he said darkly, “I hope you will like them.”

208 The awful cynicism of this made an uncomfortable impression, and most of them began to look rather doubtful. After all, their faces said, were they not noodles to want to go?

209 “Now then,” cried Peter, “no fuss, no blubbering; good-bye, Wendy,” and he held out his hand cheerily, quite as if they must really go now, for he had something important to do.

14. **draught** (draft) *n.* portion.

- 210 She had to take his hand, and there was no indication that he would prefer a thimble.
- 211 “You will remember about changing your flannels, Peter?” she said, lingering over him. She was always so particular about their flannels.
- 212 “Yes.”
- 213 “And you will take your medicine?”
- 214 “Yes.”
- 215 That seemed to be everything, and an awkward pause followed. Peter, however, was not the kind that breaks down before other people. “Are you ready, Tinker Bell?” he called out.
- 216 “Ay, ay.”
- 217 “Then lead the way.”
- 218 Tink darted up the nearest tree; but no one followed her, for it was at this moment that the pirates made their dreadful attack upon the redskins. Above, where all had been so still, the air was rent with shrieks and the clash of steel. Below, there was dead silence. Mouths opened and remained open. Wendy fell on her knees, but her arms were extended toward Peter. All arms were extended to him, as if suddenly blown in his direction; they were beseeching him mutely not to desert them. As for Peter, he seized his sword, the same he thought he had slain Barbecue with, and the lust of battle was in his eye. 🐼

Raymond's Run

Toni Cade Bambara

About the Author

Toni Cade Bambara (1939–1995) grew up in New York City, where life was tough but rewarding. She loved the city and the lively talk of the streets. Bambara learned she had a gift for capturing the language and struggles of real people, and her mother inspired her to write. “She [my mother] gave me permission to wonder, to . . . dawdle, to daydream,” Bambara once said.

BACKGROUND

“Raymond’s Run” takes place in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City, where Toni Cade Bambara lived until she was ten years old. The story was published in 1972 as part of Bambara’s first, and most well known, collection of short stories, *Gorilla, My Love*. The collection celebrates the voice and experience of young African American women and their communities.

- 1 I don’t have much work to do around the house like some girls. My mother does that. And I don’t have to earn my pocket money by hustling; George runs errands for the big boys and sells Christmas cards. And anything else that’s got to get done, my father does. All I have to do in life is mind my brother Raymond, which is enough.
- 2 Sometimes I slip and say my little brother Raymond. But as any fool can see he’s much bigger and he’s older too. But a lot of people call him my little brother cause he needs looking after cause he’s not quite right. And a lot of smart mouths got lots to say about that too, especially when George was minding him. But now, if anybody has anything to say to Raymond, anything to say about his big head, they have to come by me. And I don’t play

NOTES

the dozens¹ or believe in standing around with somebody in my face doing a lot of talking. I much rather just knock you down and take my chances even if I am a little girl with skinny arms and a squeaky voice, which is how I got the name Squeaky. And if things get too rough, I run. And as anybody can tell you, I'm the fastest thing on two feet.

3 There is no track meet that I don't win the first-place medal. I used to win the twenty-yard dash when I was a little kid in kindergarten. Nowadays, it's the fifty-yard dash. And tomorrow I'm subject to run the quarter-meter relay all by myself and come in first, second, and third. The big kids call me Mercury² cause I'm the swiftest thing in the neighborhood. Everybody knows that—except two people who know better, my father and me. He can beat me to Amsterdam Avenue with me having a two-fire-hydrant headstart and him running with his hands in his pockets and whistling. But that's private information. Cause can you imagine some thirty-five-year-old man stuffing himself into PAL³ shorts to race little kids? So as far as everyone's concerned, I'm the fastest and that goes for Gretchen, too, who has put out the tale that she is going to win the first-place medal this year. Ridiculous. In the second place, she's got short legs. In the third place, she's got freckles. In the first place, no one can beat me and that's all there is to it.

4 I'm standing on the corner admiring the weather and about to take a stroll down Broadway so I can practice my breathing exercises, and I've got Raymond walking on the inside close to the buildings, cause he's subject to fits of fantasy and starts thinking he's a circus performer and that the curb is a tightrope strung high in the air. And sometimes after a rain he likes to step down off his tightrope right into the gutter and slosh around getting his shoes and cuffs wet. Then I get hit when I get home. Or sometimes if you don't watch him he'll dash across traffic to the island in the middle of Broadway and give the pigeons a fit. Then I have to go behind him apologizing to all the old people sitting around trying to get some sun and getting all upset with the pigeons fluttering around them, scattering their newspapers and upsetting the waxpaper lunches in their laps. So I keep Raymond on the inside of me, and he plays like he's driving a stage coach which is OK by me so long as he doesn't run me over or interrupt my breathing exercises, which I have to do on account of I'm serious about my running, and I don't care who knows it.

5 Now some people like to act like things come easy to them, won't let on that they practice. Not me. I'll high-prance down

1. **the dozens** game in which the players insult one another; the first to show anger loses

2. **Mercury** in Roman mythology, the messenger of the gods, known for great speed.

3. **PAL** Police Athletic League.

34th Street like a rodeo pony to keep my knees strong even if it does get my mother uptight so that she walks ahead like she's not with me, don't know me, is all by herself on a shopping trip, and I am somebody else's crazy child. Now you take Cynthia Procter for instance. She's just the opposite. If there's a test tomorrow, she'll say something like, "Oh, I guess I'll play handball this afternoon and watch television tonight," just to let you know she ain't thinking about the test. Or like last week when she won the spelling bee for the millionth time, "A good thing you got 'receive,' Squeaky, cause I would have got it wrong. I completely forgot about the spelling bee." And she'll clutch the lace on her blouse like it was a narrow escape. Oh, brother. But of course when I pass her house on my early morning trots around the block, she is practicing the scales on the piano over and over and over and over. Then in music class she always lets herself get bumped around so she falls accidentally on purpose onto the piano stool and is so surprised to find herself sitting there that she decides just for fun to try out the ole keys. And what do you know—Chopin's⁴ waltzes just spring out of her fingertips and she's the most surprised thing in the world. A regular prodigy. I could kill people like that. I stay up all night studying the words for the spelling bee. And you can see me any time of day practicing running. I never walk if I can trot, and shame on Raymond if he can't keep up. But of course he does, cause if he hangs back someone's liable to walk up to him and get smart, or take his allowance from him, or ask him where he got that great big pumpkin head. People are so stupid sometimes.

- 6 So I'm strolling down Broadway breathing out and breathing in on counts of seven, which is my lucky number, and here comes Gretchen and her sidekicks: Mary Louise, who used to be a friend of mine when she first moved to Harlem from Baltimore and got beat up by everybody till I took up for her on account of her mother and my mother used to sing in the same choir when they were young girls, but people ain't grateful, so now she hangs out with the new girl Gretchen and talks about me like a dog; and Rosie, who is as fat as I am skinny and has a big mouth where Raymond is concerned and is too stupid to know that there is not a big deal of difference between herself and Raymond and that she can't afford to throw stones. So they are steady coming up Broadway and I see right away that it's going to be one of those Dodge City⁵ scenes cause the street ain't that big and they're close to the buildings just as we are. First I think I'll step into the candy store and look over the new comics and let them pass. But that's

4. **Chopin's** (shoh pan) Frédéric François Chopin (1810–1849), highly regarded Polish composer and pianist, known for his challenging piano compositions.

5. **Dodge City** location of the television program *Gunsmoke*, which often presented a gunfight between the sheriff and an outlaw.

chicken and I've got a reputation to consider. So then I think I'll just walk straight on through them or even over them if necessary. But as they get to me, they slow down. I'm ready to fight, cause like I said I don't feature a whole lot of chit-chat, I much prefer to just knock you down right from the jump and save everybody a lotta precious time.

7 "You signing up for the May Day races?" smiles Mary Louise, only it's not a smile at all. A dumb question like that doesn't deserve an answer. Besides, there's just me and Gretchen standing there really, so no use wasting my breath talking to shadows.

8 "I don't think you're going to win this time," says Rosie, trying to signify with her hands on her hips all salty, completely forgetting that I have whupped her behind many times for less salt than that.

9 "I always win cause I'm the best," I say straight at Gretchen who is, as far as I'm concerned, the only one talking in this ventriloquist-dummy routine.⁶ Gretchen smiles, but it's not a smile, and I'm thinking that girls never really smile at each other because they don't know how and don't want to know how and there's probably no one to teach us how, cause grown-up girls don't know either. Then they all look at Raymond who has just brought his mule team to a standstill. And they're about to see what trouble they can get into through him.

10 "What grade you in now, Raymond?"

11 "You got anything to say to my brother, you say it to me, Mary Louise Williams of Raggedy Town, Baltimore."

12 "What are you, his mother?" sasses Rosie.

13 "That's right, Fatso. And the next word out of anybody and I'll be their mother too." So they just stand there and Gretchen shifts from one leg to the other and so do they.

14 Then Gretchen puts her hands on her hips and is about to say something with her freckle-face self but doesn't. Then she walks around me looking me up and down but keeps walking up Broadway, and her sidekicks follow her. So me and Raymond smile at each other and he says, "Gidyap" to his team and I continue with my breathing exercises, strolling down Broadway toward the ice man on 145th with not a care in the world cause I am Miss Quicksilver herself.

15 I take my time getting to the park on May Day because the track meet is the last thing on the program. The biggest thing on the program is the May Pole dancing, which I can do without, thank you, even if my mother thinks it's a shame I don't take part and act like a girl for a change. You'd think my mother'd be grateful not to have to make me a white organdy dress with a

6. **ventriloquist** (vehn TRIHL uh kwihst) **dummy routine** a comedy act in which the performer speaks through a puppet called a "dummy."

big satin sash and buy me new white baby-doll shoes that can't be taken out of the box till the big day. You'd think she'd be glad her daughter ain't out there prancing around a May Pole getting the new clothes all dirty and sweaty and trying to act like a fairy or a flower or whatever you're supposed to be when you should be trying to be yourself, whatever that is, which is, as far as I am concerned, a poor black girl who really can't afford to buy shoes and a new dress you only wear once a lifetime cause it won't fit next year.

- 16 I was once a strawberry in a Hansel and Gretel pageant when I was in nursery school and didn't have no better sense than to dance on tiptoe with my arms in a circle over my head doing umbrella steps and being a perfect fool just so my mother and father could come dressed up and clap. You'd think they'd know better than to encourage that kind of nonsense. I am not a strawberry. I do not dance on my toes. I run. That is what I am all about. So I always come late to the May Day program, just in time to get my number pinned on and lay in the grass till they announce the fifty-yard dash.
- 17 I put Raymond in the little swings, which is a tight squeeze this year and will be impossible next year. Then I look around for Mr. Pearson, who pins the numbers on. I'm really looking for Gretchen if you want to know the truth, but she's not around. The park is jam-packed. Parents in hats and corsages and breast-pocket handkerchiefs peeking up. Kids in white dresses and light-blue suits. The parkees⁷ unfolding chairs and chasing the rowdy kids from Lenox as if they had no right to be there. The big guys with their caps on backwards, leaning against the fence swirling the basketballs on the tips of their fingers, waiting for all these crazy people to clear out the park so they can play. Most of the kids in my class are carrying bass drums and glockenspiels⁸ and flutes. You'd think they'd put in a few bongos or something for real like that.
- 18 Then here comes Mr. Pearson with his clipboard and his cards and pencils and whistles and safety pins and fifty million other things he's always dropping all over the place with his clumsy self. He sticks out in a crowd because he's on stilts. We used to call him Jack and the Beanstalk to get him mad. But I'm the only one that can outrun him and get away, and I'm too grown for that silliness now.
- 19 "Well, Squeaky," he says, checking my name off the list and handing me number seven and two pins. And I'm thinking he's got no right to call me Squeaky, if I can't call him Beanstalk.

7. **parkees** people who are often seen visiting the park.

8. **glockenspiels** (GLOK uhn speelz) *n.* musical instruments with flat metal bars that make bell-like tones when struck with small hammers.

- 20 “Hazel Elizabeth Deborah Parker,” I correct him and tell him to write it down on his board.
- 21 “Well, Hazel Elizabeth Deborah Parker, going to give someone else a break this year?” I squint at him real hard to see if he is seriously thinking I should lose the race on purpose just to give someone else a break. “Only six girls running this time,” he continues, shaking his head sadly like it’s my fault all of New York didn’t turn out in sneakers. “That new girl should give you a run for your money.” He looks around the park for Gretchen like a periscope⁹ in a submarine movie. “Wouldn’t it be a nice gesture if you were . . . to ahhh . . .”
- 22 I give him such a look he couldn’t finish putting that idea into words. Grown-ups got a lot of nerve sometimes. I pin number seven to myself and stomp away, I’m so burnt. And I go straight for the track and stretch out on the grass while the band winds up with “Oh, the Monkey Wrapped His Tail Around the Flag Pole,” which my teacher calls by some other name. The man on the loudspeaker is calling everyone over to the track and I’m on my back looking at the sky, trying to pretend I’m in the country, but I can’t, because even grass in the city feels hard as sidewalk, and there’s just no pretending you are anywhere but in a “concrete jungle” as my grandfather says.
- 23 The twenty-yard dash takes all of two minutes cause most of the little kids don’t know no better than to run off the track or run the wrong way or run smack into the fence and fall down and cry. One little kid, though, has got the good sense to run straight for the white ribbon up ahead so he wins. Then the second-graders line up for the thirty-yard dash and I don’t even bother to turn my head to watch cause Raphael Perez always wins. He wins before he even begins by psyching the runners, telling them they’re going to trip on their shoelaces and fall on their faces or lose their shorts or something, which he doesn’t really have to do since he is very fast, almost as fast as I am. After that is the forty-yard dash which I used to run when I was in first grade. Raymond is hollering from the swings cause he knows I’m about to do my thing cause the man on the loudspeaker has just announced the fifty-yard dash, although he might just as well be giving a recipe for angel food cake cause you can hardly make out what he’s sayin’ for the static. I get up and slip off my sweat pants and then I see Gretchen standing at the starting line, kicking her legs out like a pro. Then as I get into place I see that ole Raymond is on line on the other side of the fence, bending down with his fingers on the ground just like he knew what he was doing. I was going to yell at him but then I didn’t. It burns up your energy to holler.

9. **periscope** *n.* tube that rises from a submarine to allow sailors to see objects above the water’s surface.

24 Every time, just before I take off in a race, I always feel like I'm in a dream, the kind of dream you have when you're sick with fever and feel all hot and weightless. I dream I'm flying over a sandy beach in the early morning sun, kissing the leaves of the trees as I fly by. And there's always the smell of apples, just like in the country when I was little and used to think I was a choo-choo train, running through the fields of corn and chugging up the hill to the orchard. And all the time I'm dreaming this, I get lighter and lighter until I'm flying over the beach again, getting blown through the sky like a feather that weighs nothing at all. But once I spread my fingers in the dirt and crouch over the Get on Your Mark, the dream goes and I am solid again and am telling myself, Squeaky you must win, you must win, you are the fastest thing in the world, you can even beat your father up Amsterdam if you really try. And then I feel my weight coming back just behind my knees then down to my feet then into the earth and the pistol shot explodes in my blood and I am off and weightless again, flying past the other runners, my arms pumping up and down and the whole world is quiet except for the crunch as I zoom over the gravel in the track. I glance to my left and there is no one. To the right, a blurred Gretchen, who's got her chin jutting out as if it would win the race all by itself. And on the other side of the fence is Raymond with his arms down to his side and the palms tucked up behind him, running in his very own style, and it's the first time I ever saw that and I almost stop to watch my brother Raymond on his first run. But the white ribbon is bouncing toward me and I tear past it, racing into the distance till my feet with a mind of their own start digging up footfuls of dirt and brake me short. Then all the kids standing on the side pile on me, banging me on the back and slapping my head with their May Day programs, for I have won again and everybody on 151st Street can walk tall for another year.

25 "In first place . . ." the man on the loudspeaker is clear as a bell now. But then he pauses and the loudspeaker starts to whine. Then static. And I lean down to catch my breath and here comes Gretchen walking back, for she's overshot the finish line too, huffing and puffing with her hands on her hips taking it slow, breathing in steady time like a real pro and I sort of like her a little for the first time. "In first place . . ." and then three or four voices get all mixed up on the loudspeaker and I dig my sneaker into the grass and stare at Gretchen who's staring back, we both wondering just who did win. I can hear old Beanstalk arguing with the man on the loudspeaker and then a few others running their mouths about what the stopwatches say. Then I hear Raymond yanking at the fence to call me and I wave to shush him, but he keeps rattling the fence like a gorilla in a cage

like in them gorilla movies, but then like a dancer or something he starts climbing up nice and easy but very fast. And it occurs to me, watching how smoothly he climbs hand over hand and remembering how he looked running with his arms down to his side and with the wind pulling his mouth back and his teeth showing and all, it occurred to me that Raymond would make a very fine runner. Doesn't he always keep up with me on my trots? And he surely knows how to breathe in counts of seven cause he's always doing it at the dinner table, which drives my brother George up the wall. And I'm smiling to beat the band cause if I've lost this race, or if me and Gretchen tied, or even if I've won, I can always retire as a runner and begin a whole new career as a coach with Raymond as my champion. After all, with a little more study I can beat Cynthia and her phony self at the spelling bee. And if I bugged my mother, I could get piano lessons and become a star. And I have a big rep as the baddest thing around. And I've got a roomful of ribbons and medals and awards. But what has Raymond got to call his own?

- 26 So I stand there with my new plans, laughing out loud by this time as Raymond jumps down from the fence and runs over with his teeth showing and his arms down to the side, which no one before him has quite mastered as a running style. And by the time he comes over I'm jumping up and down so glad to see him—my brother Raymond, a great runner in the family tradition. But of course everyone thinks I'm jumping up and down because the men on the loudspeaker have finally gotten themselves together and compared notes and are announcing "In first place—Miss Hazel Elizabeth Deborah Parker." (Dig that.) "In second place—Miss Gretchen P. Lewis." And I look over at Gretchen wondering what the "P" stands for. And I smile. Cause she's good, no doubt about it. Maybe she'd like to help me coach Raymond; she obviously is serious about running, as any fool can see. And she nods to congratulate me and then she smiles. And I smile. We stand there with this big smile of respect between us. It's about as real a smile as girls can do for each other, considering we don't practice real smiling every day, you know, cause maybe we too busy being flowers or fairies or strawberries instead of something honest and worthy of respect . . . you know . . . like being people. 🍓