

Are You Listening?

Story By: Andrew Frinkle

“Are you listening, Simon?” Simon’s teacher asked. It was a pretty usual question.

Simon smiled and shook his head. He rarely listened or tried hard in class. Talking was so much better. He wanted to be heard. He had opinion! “I was talking to Susan.” He said lazily.

“One of these days, you’ll actually listen, and you’ll learn something.” Mrs. Jacobs said in frustration. She tried every day, but he never paid attention.



That evening, Simon started to feel a little bit sick. By his bedtime snack, his throat really hurt. He had ice cream and hot chocolate to make his throat feel better, but he wasn’t sure it’d work.

The next morning, when he opened his mouth to say, “Good morning,” nothing came out but a croak. “Guh.” His voice squeaked.

Simon’s mother looked at him. “Honey, you’ve lost your voice.”

“Can I stay home?” He tried to ask, but words didn’t come out. Instead, his mother checked him for a fever and pronounced him good to go to school, even if he couldn’t talk. How awful!

When he got to school, Mrs. Jacobs said, “Hello,” to him, and he just nodded. When his friends started to ask him what TV shows he watched last night, he just shrugged. By the time the bell rang to start class, almost everyone was looking at him as if he’d grown a third eye or an extra nose.

Penny raised her hand. “Mrs. Jacobs, why isn’t Simon talking?”

“I’m scared. He never stops talking.” Richard said worriedly. He was scared of everything, though.

“I’m sick. I can’t talk.” Simon tried to whisper, but no one could understand. He wrote it down instead.

Everyone started talking at once. They were excited, worried, and surprised. Mrs. Jacobs was actually happy it seemed! What a cruel woman.

Simon sat in class, bored because he couldn’t talk to his neighbors. He watched them talk to each other and ignore the teacher, but he couldn’t even do that. In math class he could hold up fingers if the answer was less than 10, but that wasn’t fun. He decided to try to pay attention, out of sheer boredom.

You know what? It wasn’t that bad. He could actually do his homework that night. It gave him extra TV time and game time because his work was all done. All along, all he’d had to do was listen.

The next day, even though his voice was coming back, he stayed quiet again. The third day, he could talk fine, but he didn’t interrupt or waste time. He listened and raised his hand to speak.

What a difference that one day made.

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Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What kind of student is Simon NOT?
 - A. A good student
 - B. A lazy student
 - C. A student that doesn't try hard
 - D. A student who talks too much

2. What does Mrs. Jacobs hope for?
 - A. That Simon would switch schools.
 - B. That Simon would get sick.
 - C. That Simon would listen for once.
 - D. That Simon would bring her an apple.

3. What happens to Simon the next day?
 - A. He loses his dog.
 - B. His mother gets sick.
 - C. He argues with his friends.
 - D. He loses his voice.

4. What does Simon finally try when he can't talk?
 - A. He tries sleeping.
 - B. He tries eating
 - C. He tries listening.
 - D. He tries to get out of class.

5. What did Simon learn through listening?
 - A. He learned that Mrs. Jacobs is an awful teacher.
 - B. He learned that you can learn things if you listen.
 - C. He learned that his friends hate him.
 - D. He learned that he didn't like school.

Are You Listening? – Answer Key

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Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

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