

The Story Shell

Book 2, Tales of Friendship Bog

Discussion Questions:

CHAPTER 1

1. How can you tell that Pibbin likes to eat bugs? *(He thought the red bugs looked good.)*
2. Do you think you would like to eat any of the things Skitter made? *(Answers will vary.)*
3. What have you found out so far about Leeper? *(He is helping his uncle. He's big and strong.)*
4. Do you think Gaffer's tree is hollow? *(Yes.)*
How can you tell? *(He had rooms inside, stacked on top of each other.)*
5. Why did people like Gaffer's stories? *(His stories warmed their hearts.)*
What do you think that means? *(Answers may include the ideas that his stories were encouraging or made them feel good inside.)*

CHAPTER 2

1. Where did Gaffer keep his shell? *(in a hollow spot at the base of his tree, hidden by ferns)*
2. What worried Pibbin about the sand on the deck? *(It meant that someone might have been standing next to the shell and perhaps had taken it.)*
3. What worried Pibbin about the tracks in the sand? *(They were big tracks and would belong to an animal much larger than he was.)*
4. Would you like to have a friend like Gaffer? *(Answers will vary.)*
5. Why did Pibbin think he should wait for Leeper? *(Leeper was bigger and stronger and would know what to do.)*
6. Do you think Pibbin liked it when Skitter said he was too small? *(He probably didn't.)*
7. Why was Pibbin in such a hurry to find the shell? *(He wanted Gaffer to be able to tell his story at the party that night.)*

CHAPTER 3

1. How did Pibbin feel when he was scared? *(He had a bitter taste in his mouth.)*
What does it feel like to you when you're scared? *(Answers will vary.)*
2. Do you think it makes sense for Pibbin to be scared? *(Yes.)*
Why or why not? *(Answers will vary but could include the ideas that he is small and not very confident, and that what he wants to do seems difficult or impossible.)*

3. Are Pibbin and Carpenter good friends? *(Probably not.)*
How can you tell? *(Pibbin wants to avoid him. Carpenter doesn't speak kindly to him.)*
4. Do you think Miss Green understood how Pibbin felt? *(Yes.)*
How can you tell? *(She asked whether he was feeling small.)*
5. How did Miss Green encourage Pibbin? *(Answers will vary but could include: she said he had a big heart and a quick mind, and she told him it was okay to be scared.)*
6. What did Miss Green say it meant to be brave? *(She said, "Brave is when you're scared and you do it anyway.")*

CHAPTER 4

1. Why did Pibbin watch the tops of the grass? *(He knew that if the grass moved, the rabbit might be nearby.)*
2. Why did the grass tremble when the rabbit took a bite? *(She ripped at the grass, and that made it move back and forth a little bit.)*
3. Why did Pibbin's legs tremble? *(He thought about her sharp teeth ripping the grass, and he was afraid of her.)* Have your legs ever felt like that? *(Answers will vary.)*
4. What did Pibbin think it meant when the rabbit's whiskers twitched? *(He hoped it meant she knew something about the shell.)*
5. Why did Pibbin stare at her when she told him she'd rolled the shell around? *(He was surprised that she would think stories could be kept in a shell like acorns in a tree.)*
6. What made Pibbin decide to go with BOSS? *(Answers will vary but could include: he thought it seemed the best and fastest way to find the shell.)*

CHAPTER 5

1. What did Pibbin see in the swamp? *(Answers will vary but could include: dead trees, gray limbs, puddles of water, moss, shadows.)*
2. Why didn't BOSS walk very fast? *(He was plump, and he didn't care about Pibbin's project.)*
3. Frogs need to keep their skin moist. Why would the hot sun and the sand make Pibbin feel tired? *(Answers will vary but could include: the sun and sand would dry out his skin and he would lose that cooling protection.)*
Have you ever felt tired when you've been out in the sun for a long time? *(Answers will vary.)*
4. Why do you think BOSS stopped humming? *(He wasn't sure which way to go.)*
5. What does BOSS like to eat? *(Answers may include: water lily roots and leaves.)*

6. Do you think something bad has happened to Leeper? *(Yes. He didn't move, and he seemed all crumpled up like dead grass.)*

CHAPTER 6

1. Why did BOSS laugh? *(He thought it was fun to chase Pibbin.)*
2. Why didn't BOSS give Leeper the food he needed? *(He didn't know what frogs eat and didn't care enough to find out.)*
Do you think he meant to starve Leeper? *(No, BOSS wasn't mean. He was careless.)*
3. Who always made the plans when Pibbin and Leeper had an adventure? *(Leeper did.)*
Why didn't he make one now? *(He was injured and probably couldn't think very well.)*
4. Why did Leeper have so much trouble climbing the stick? *(Answers will vary but could include: he was weak, and his leg was injured, and he wasn't used to climbing.)*
Why did Pibbin have no trouble climbing all over the cage? *(He's a treefrog. [Note: Treefrogs have sticky pads on their toes to help them climb. See the frog resource photos on the website.])*
5. The word for a young beaver looks almost like *kid* but it means *baby beaver*. Can you find it? *(kit)*
What other young animal does the word remind you of? *(kitten)*
6. Who was the leader now? *(Pibbin)*
How can you tell? *(Answers will vary but should include the idea that he was making the decisions and saying things like, "We have to go now.")*

CHAPTER 7

1. Where did Pibbin go after they left the river? *(to a clump of blueberry bushes)*
2. What do you think Pibbin meant when he said that water dogs are the worst kind? *(Answers will vary. To Pibbin, a dog who liked water was more dangerous than one who stayed on land because a water dog could chase a swimming frog.)*
3. BOSS called Leeper his little friend, but how did he act with him? *(Answers will vary but could include: BOSS didn't think about how Leeper might feel about being kept in a cage. BOSS didn't bother to find out what Leeper needed. BOSS acted selfishly in everything he did with Leeper.)*
4. Pibbin called Leeper his friend. How did he show that? *(Answers may include: Pibbin worried about Leeper when he didn't come back. Pibbin didn't try to escape without Leeper. Pibbin cared for Leeper by giving him food, and helping him up the stick, and encouraging him. He acted unselfishly.)*
5. Which one was a true friend for Leeper? *(If answers vary, take this opportunity to discuss the concept that true friends behave unselfishly with each other.)*
6. What worried Pibbin most about Zip? *(her sharp teeth)*
7. How did Leeper encourage Pibbin? *(He said he'd be okay by himself and that he was sure Pibbin would find the shell.)* Do you think Leeper acted like a true friend? *(Discuss.)*

CHAPTER 8

1. Why did Pibbin feel as if he were drowning in words when Zip talked to him? (*because she used so many words without stopping*)
2. Why did Pibbin have to take longer and longer jumps to keep up with Zip? (*She must have started walking faster and faster.*)
3. How many words can you find that show how Zip moved? (*Answers will vary but could include: "flicked," "whirled," and "spun".*)
Do you think Zip is a good name for this squirrel? (*Answers will vary.*)
4. Do you think Zip is a mean-hearted person? (*Answers will vary.*)
Why or why not? (*Answers could include: she was sorry about the shell and agreed to take it back; she worried about her sick child.*)
5. Did Zip think she had a good reason for keeping the shell? (*Yes.*)
Does that mean it was okay for her to do it? (*Answers should include the idea that just because we think something is okay, that doesn't make it right.*)
6. Why didn't Pibbin want to ask Carpenter for the things they needed? (*He had lost Carpenter's hammer and knew that Carpenter didn't trust him.*)
Have you ever felt like Pibbin did? (*Answers will vary.*)

CHAPTER 9

1. What made Carpenter change his mind about lending his tools? (*Zip had been kind to him.*)
2. Was Carpenter worried about his pulley? (*Yes.*)
How can you tell? (*He warned Pibbin to be careful, and he watched him.*)
3. Pibbin didn't have Leeper there to make a plan, so he made one himself. What do you think of it?
(*Answers will vary.*)
How would you have tried to get the shell out of the bog? (*Answers will vary.*)
4. Would you like to have Alix for a helper? (*Answers will vary.*)
Why or why not? (*Answers will vary.*)
5. How can you tell that Pibbin was glad his plan worked? (*He gave his special call, "wonk," and he felt like smiling.*)
6. Why did everything in the bog seem to hold its breath when the hawk was there? (*Answers should include the idea that hawks eat small animals like frogs, mice, and young squirrels. To Pibbin it would seem that the whole bog was worried about the hawk being there.*)
7. Do you think Carpenter began to change his mind about Pibbin? (*Answers will vary.*)
Why or why not? (*Answers will vary.*)

CHAPTER 10

1. Do you think Pibbin was still worried about the shell? *(Yes.)*
How can you tell? *(He didn't want to go ahead. He wanted to stay with it.)*
2. Do you think Gaffer would like Zip's black-ant jam? *(Yes, he probably would.)*
Why or why not? *(Frogs like to eat ants and other small insects.)*
3. Did Skitter scold Zip for taking the shell? *(No, she was happy to have it back, and Zip had said she was sorry.)*
4. What is Gaffer's favorite thing to eat? *(Sweet-and-sour slugs.)*
5. How do you think Pibbin felt when he saw Leeper? *(Answers will vary but should include the idea that he was happy and relieved.)*
6. Do you think Gaffer could tell a story **without** his story shell? *(Yes, although it helped him.)*
How did it help him? *(Answers could include: the shell was like an encouraging friend; it helped him to become quiet and think; the quietness seemed to make his voice stronger.)*
7. In order to find Gaffer's shell, Pibbin had to do some things he didn't want to do. Was he a true friend? *(Yes.)*
Why or why not? *(Answers will vary.)*
Is it hard sometimes to be a true friend? *(Discuss.)*
8. Do you think Gaffer understood how hard it was for Pibbin to be brave when Leeper wasn't there? *(Yes.)*
How can you tell? *(He said that sometimes it is hard to do without friends, and he was looking at Pibbin when he said it.)*
9. Why do you think the animals named their pond Friendship Bog? *(Answers may vary but should include the idea that they had all worked together and helped each other, as friends do.)*
10. What did Alix think of Pibbin? *(He thought Pibbin was intrepid—he was brave and didn't give up.)*
What about Miss Green? *(She agreed.)* What do you think? *(Answers may vary.)*