

Quiz A: RL.8.2

Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

Free or Fugitive?

- 1 Franklin heard a sound at the woodpile and struggled to contain his excitement. Maybe another red fox, rabbit, or white-tailed deer had gotten in through the slats at the back of the woodshed. When he entered the woodshed, he saw nothing. Over the next few days, however, he noticed more than just strange sounds. One of his mother's prized blankets stayed on the laundry line for three days and then turned up neatly folded on the floor of the woodshed. The corn and cabbage he left for the chickens vanished, and yet they continued to peck at the ground as if they were still hungry.
- 2 Winter was coming. Franklin could see snow on the tops of the faraway hills. It was his favorite time of year. Squirrels were bustling over the land, collecting acorns. Mother was busy in the kitchen, pickling fall vegetables and preserving fruits. The ground was hard with frost. In spite of his love for the season, Franklin was lonely. Since his best friend Edgar had moved into Philadelphia so that his father could find work, Franklin had nothing to do in the afternoons except keep out of his mother's way, which meant he was often out in the yard, doing his chores or keeping watch for animals. But these days, when Franklin was in the yard, he had the odd sensation that someone was watching him.
- 3 Before long, he concluded that there was a ghost living in the woodshed, and one evening he confronted his father with the idea. His father reacted angrily. "We'll have no talk of ghosts in the woodshed!" he said. "And be careful what you go around saying," he continued sternly. "Many walls have eyes and ears." After that, Franklin kept quiet. With Edgar gone and his younger brother, Jessie, still tied to his mother's apron strings, Franklin had to keep his suspicions to himself. He did, however, decide to perform a little test. The next afternoon, he spread hay over the floor of the shed. Then he placed an old sweater and a piece of buttered bread on top of the woodpile. Sure enough, the next afternoon, the bread and the sweater were gone. The hay had been disturbed by footprints.
- 4 Then Franklin began to hear whispers—in the local meeting hall, at the counter of the feed store—about a runaway slave, a woman named Annie, hiding in the neighborhood. Many people in the community were abolitionists and didn't believe in slavery. The problem was the Fugitive Slave Act, passed in 1850. As a result of the act, heavily armed federal agents had the authority to go looking for fugitive slaves. Anyone who helped a runaway slave faced high fines and even imprisonment.
- 5 Listening to the talk, Franklin put two and two together: Annie was hiding in their woodshed. Did his parents know? Franklin decided that his parents were well aware of their guest. Mother, always so careful with her handmade quilts and winter shawls, left whole sets of clothes on the washing line. Father, usually so careful about not wasting food, left most of his dinner uneaten each night. Then it was Franklin's job to take the kitchen scraps out to the chickens. Only now his mother put these scraps on a proper plate with a fork. Who ever heard of chickens eating with a fork?

