

The Box in the Barn

by Barbara Eckfeld Conner

Jason heard his mom calling him. Instead of answering her, he slipped deeper into the tall weeds behind his house. He closed his eyes, thinking of what he had done.

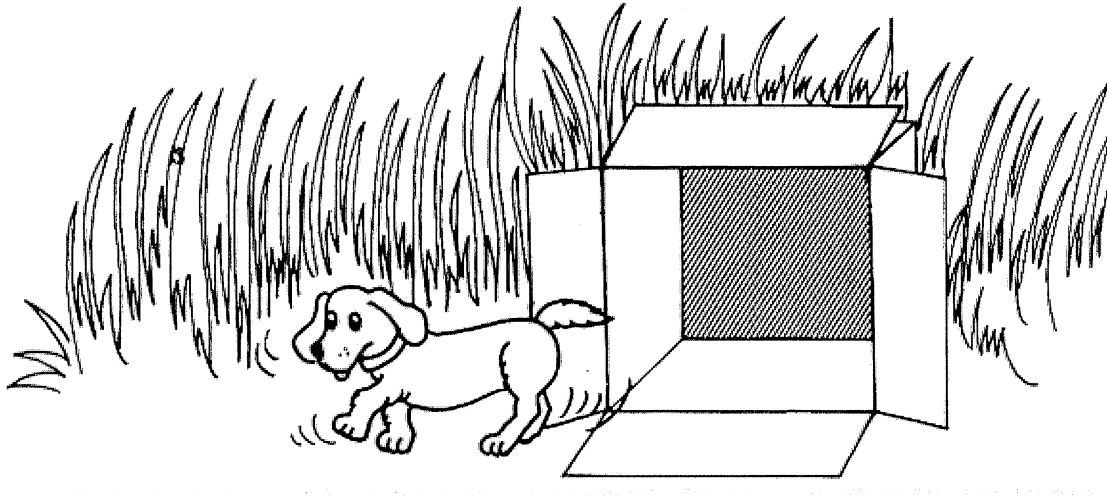
He had gotten up that morning in a good mood. Raspberry pancakes were on the table when he walked into the kitchen rubbing his eyes and yawning.

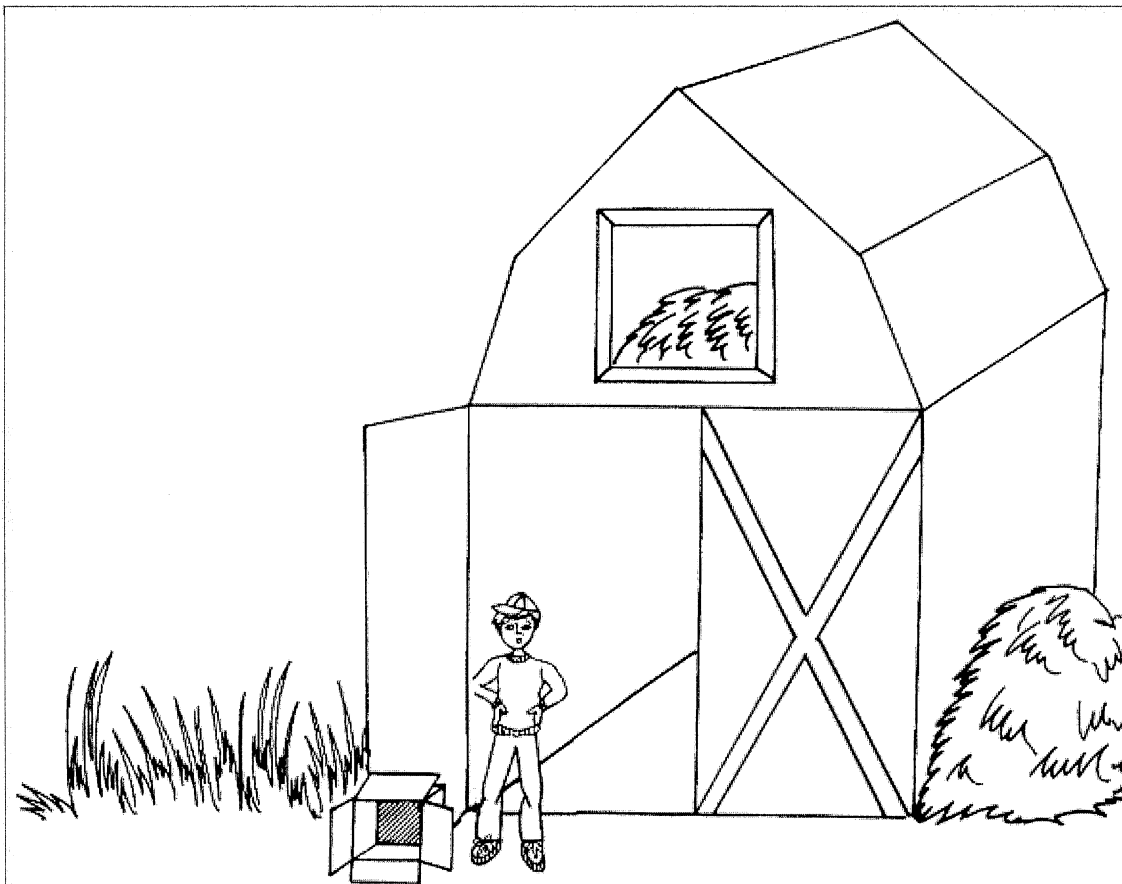
"After breakfast, Jason, I want you to go into town with me," Mom said quietly. "It's your sister's birthday, and we need to shop for her gifts."

Jason was eager to go, even if the gifts weren't for him. Buying presents was always fun.

As they drove to town, Jason couldn't help but ask the question that had been on his mind since yesterday when Aunt Nancy came. "What's in the big box that Dad took to the barn, Mom? Is it something Aunt Nancy bought for Megan's birthday?"

"It's a surprise, Jason, and I don't want you going near that barn today. Do you hear me?"





Jason sat staring at the road ahead. He knew that nothing would change her mind. Only now he was more curious than ever!

Back home, Megan ran out to meet Jason, her eyes wide and excited. "Jason, Jason, I'm six years old!" she cried, jumping up and down.

"I know, I know." Jason gave her a big hug.

Soon the house was buzzing with excitement. Megan sat on the stool watching while Mom and Aunt Nancy prepared the birthday dinner. Dad wouldn't be back for at least two hours. Jason wandered outside trying to think of something to do, but his thoughts kept returning to the box in the barn.

He started walking toward the barn, not at all sure what he'd do when he got there. He was hoping for just a glimpse of the box. Instead he heard a strange noise coming from inside the barn. He wished he could just turn back to the house, but his legs carried him into the barn. Jason saw the box. It was sitting between two bales of hay. He could hear loud wailing cries. Leaning over, Jason carefully lifted the lid. There was the most cuddly puppy he had ever seen!

"You must be pretty scared, huh, fellow?" Jason said quietly as he held the wiggly dog. "Megan's going to love you!" He secretly wished the puppy was for him. After all, Mom and Dad knew that he had been wanting his own puppy. Probably Aunt Nancy didn't know that, and anyway Megan would be happy.

Soon Jason was playing happily with the puppy, and he forgot that he wasn't supposed to be in the barn. Taffy, their big brown horse, stuck his head in the window as if to say, "What's going on?" Jason jumped, remembering that he wasn't supposed to be there. The puppy ran off as fast as it could out of the barn and into the field.

Jason stumbled out of the barn looking wildly for any trace of the puppy. "Come on, puppy! Oh,

please come here!" he called, his eyes welling up with tears.

Now here he was, two hours later, hiding in the weeds. He'd looked everywhere, but the puppy was gone. He had ruined his sister's birthday.

"Jason! It's time for dinner!" Mom called even louder now. Just when he was determined to stay forever in the tall weeds, he heard his sister's voice.

"Jason! It's time for my party, Jason!" Megan yelled excitedly.

Jason rubbed his swollen eyes, trying to look normal. He couldn't ruin everything for her. "I'm here, Megan," he called.

"Are you OK?" she asked with genuine concern.

"Sure. Let's hurry." Jason grabbed her hand as they ran back.

As soon as they reached the house, the party began. Jason tried to pretend that everything was fine. When it was time to open Megan's birthday gifts, he sat in the big easy chair, hoping no one would notice him. Finally the last present was open.

"I'll be right back," Dad said.

Jason knew Dad was going to the barn. Megan would probably never forgive him for losing her birthday puppy. Everyone, even Aunt Nancy, would be angry when they found out the puppy was gone.

"Jason! Come here!" It was Dad calling from the front yard.

Jason slowly got out of the chair. It was hard to move, but Megan grabbed his hand and said, "Come on, Jason! Let's see what Dad wants."

Jason followed Megan out the door. Mom and Aunt Nancy followed close behind.

There was Dad standing with the box next to him in the grass. "Jason, I want you to open this box and see what's inside."

Jason looked up and saw that Dad was smiling. He turned and saw that Mom, Aunt Nancy, and Megan were smiling, too. What would he say to them when there was nothing in the box? But as Jason looked down, expecting to see nothing at all, he jumped back in surprise. The puppy looked up at him with sleepy eyes.

"Wow!" said Jason, bewildered.

"The puppy's for you, Son," his father said.

"I thought you'd like a gift, too, even if it isn't your birthday," said Aunt Nancy, laughing.

Megan started clapping. "Isn't he wonderful, Jason?" The puppy jumped up, ready to play. Jason and Megan spent the rest of the day with the puppy.

Later, when he was getting ready for bed, Jason turned to his father and said, "You know, Dad, I feel bad about something I did today."

Dad waited patiently as Jason explained what had happened. "And I still can't figure out how my puppy got back into his box!" he added.

"Well, Son, on my way home I saw your puppy running along the side of the road. I figured he had gotten out of his box somehow...You must have felt terrible during the party," Dad continued. "I get the feeling you've learned a lot today." He pulled back the covers on Jason's bed.

Jason looked down at his new puppy, who was sleeping soundly in a basket by the bed. "Dad, I think I'll call him Buddy."

Dad smiled and tucked the covers snugly around Jason.

1. Which best describes Jason's father?

- A) Strict and unwilling to listen to Jason
- B) Understanding and patient with Jason
- C) Curious and puzzled by the empty box
- D) Angry and sad that Jason hid

2. Why did Jason think everyone would be angry with him when they found the puppy missing?

3. When Megan spoke to Jason in the tall weeds, she was concerned that

- A) she wouldn't get enough presents
- B) her dad wouldn't get back in time for the party
- C) something was wrong with Jason
- D) the puppy was missing from the box

4. If the box had been empty when Jason opened it at the party, what would Jason most likely have said? Give examples from the story that support your answer.

5. What does Megan say in the story that shows how she felt about Jason's getting a gift on her birthday?

- A) "Jason, Jason, I'm six years old!"
- B) "Are you OK?"
- C) "Let's see what Dad wants."
- D) "Isn't he wonderful, Jason?"

6. Why do you think Jason's father explained how he found the puppy?

7. Jason's problem could have been prevented if

- A) his mother had not warned him to stay away from the barn
- B) he had not let the puppy play along the road
- C) his curiosity had not led him to open the box
- D) he had not wanted a puppy of his own so badly

8. Describe how Jason might have felt if the box had been empty when it was opened at the party. Explain why he might have felt that way.

12. What did Jason's father think Jason had learned? Tell what in the story makes you think so.

Question 2

Acceptable - Student Response

- 2 Why did Jason think everyone would be angry with him when they found the puppy missing?

Because it was Megan's party and her present and he had lost it.

- 2 Why did Jason think everyone would be angry with him when they found the puppy missing?

Because he thought that the puppy was for Megan and he would ruin the birthday party.

Scorer Comments:

Both responses demonstrate understanding that Jason thought everyone would be angry with him because he had lost the puppy that he thought was Megan's birthday present.

Unacceptable - Student Response

- 2 Why did Jason think everyone would be angry with him when they found the puppy missing?

Because he let the puppy go. and He was the only one in the barn.

- 2 Why did Jason think everyone would be angry with him when they found the puppy missing?

Because he had done something that he shouldn't have done.

Scorer Comments:

Both responses recognize that Jason felt as though he had done something wrong. These responses do not demonstrate understanding of Jason being under the impression that the puppy was Megan's birthday present.

Question 4

Acceptable - Student Response

- 4 If the box had been empty when Jason opened it at the party, what would Jason most likely have said? Give examples from the story that support your answer.

Maybe he might have just kept what he had done a secret because he had been trying to act normal

- 4 If the box had been empty when Jason opened it at the party, what would Jason most likely have said? Give examples from the story that support your answer.

He would have said "I went to the back to find something to do, and I heard a strange noise, and went in to the barn to see what it was." he sounded like a very honest boy.

Scorer Comments:

Both responses use information from the story to predict how Jason might have reacted if the box had been empty. The first response predicts that Jason might have kept it a secret, based on the part of the story when he pretended to act like everything was fine when the party began. The second response provides some dialogue that demonstrates understanding of Jason's honest character as portrayed in the story when he explains what he did to his father.

Unacceptable - Student Response

- 4 If the box had been empty when Jason opened it at the party, what would Jason most likely have said? Give examples from the story that support your answer.

I think he would say "I didn't do it." that's what most people say

- 4 If the box had been empty when Jason opened it at the party, what would Jason most likely have said? Give examples from the story that support your answer.

Jason look down and expecting not to see nothing at all.

Scorer Comments:

Neither response uses information from the story to predict Jason's reaction. The first response provides dialogue that does not demonstrate understanding of Jason's honest character. The second response provides Jason's actions from the story when the box was opened, but does not predict what Jason's reaction would have been if the box had been empty.

Question 6

Acceptable - Student Response

- 6 Why do you think Jason's father explained how he found the puppy?

Because Jason could not figure out how the puppy got back into the box again and how the box got closed again.

- 6 Why do you think Jason's father explained how he found the puppy?

His father is understanding to Jason.

Scorer Comments:

The first response uses story details to provide a reason why the father wanted to help Jason understand how he found the puppy. The second response provides a text-based characterization of Jason's father to explain why he told Jason about finding the puppy.

Unacceptable - Student Response

- 6 Why do you think Jason's father explained how he found the puppy?

He saw it running on the side of the road.

- 6 Why do you think Jason's father explained how he found the puppy?

So Megan would not be mad

Scorer Comments:

The first response provides details related to how Jason's father found the puppy, but does not explain why he told Jason. The second response provides inaccurate information about Megan, which is unrelated to the father's explanation of finding the puppy.

Question 8

Evidence of full comprehension - Student Response

- 8 Describe how Jason might have felt if the box had been empty when it was opened at the party. Explain why he might have felt that way.

I think he would of felt bad because
he thought it was his sisters present and
he let the puppy go.

- 8 Describe how Jason might have felt if the box had been empty when it was opened at the party. Explain why he might have felt that way.

I think that Jason
might have felt
bad, because he went
in the barn when
he wasn't supposed to.

Scorer Comments:

Both responses use story details to explain how Jason might have felt if the box had been empty. The first response supports the feeling with story details related to Jason thinking he had lost his sister's puppy, and the second response supports the feeling with reference to Jason having disobeyed his mother.

Evidence of partial comprehension - Student Response

- 8 Describe how Jason might have felt if the box had been empty when it was opened at the party. Explain why he might have felt that way.

Jason would had felt very blue.

- 8 Describe how Jason might have felt if the box had been empty when it was opened at the party. Explain why he might have felt that way.

he would cry

Scorer Comments:

Both responses indicate a feeling that is consistent with story events, but neither response explains the feeling with story details.

Evidence of little or no comprehension - Student Response

- 8 Describe how Jason might have felt if the box had been empty when it was opened at the party. Explain why he might have felt that way.

If it was opened His father would be mad.

- 8 Describe how Jason might have felt if the box had been empty when it was opened at the party. Explain why he might have felt that way.

because he lost the puppy

Scorer Comments:

These responses do not provide a feeling that Jason might have had if the box had been empty. The first response provides a feeling Jason's father might have had. The second response provides an event from the story without providing a feeling related to the event.

Question 9

Acceptable - Student Response

- 9 Why did Jason not answer when his mom called him for dinner?

He was afraid she would be angry that he had disobeyed her.

- 9 Why did Jason not answer when his mom called him for dinner?

He was looking for the puppy.

Scorer Comments:

Both responses use story details to explain why Jason did not answer when his mother called him. The first response focuses on Jason's disobedience and the second response focuses on Jason looking for the lost puppy.

Unacceptable - Student Response

- 9 Why did Jason not answer when his mom called him for dinner?

Jason was hiding behind the weeds and he couldn't hear his mom.

- 9 Why did Jason not answer when his mom called him for dinner?

Because he wanted to know what was in the box.

Scorer Comments:

Both responses provide details that are not relevant to why Jason did not answer when his mother called. The first response contradicts story events by concluding that Jason could not hear his mother. The second response confuses story details about the location of the box.

Question 11

Extensive - Student Response

11 From when Jason got up in the morning until he went to bed that night, his feelings changed as different things happened. Describe three different feelings that Jason had and explain what made him have those feelings.

He felt sad because he let the dog out
and it ran away and he thought he ruined
Megan's birthday
He felt happy because his dad
found the dog and because the dog was
for him.
He felt wrong because he opened
the box and his mother told her not
to touch it.

11 From when Jason got up in the morning until he went to bed that night, his feelings changed as different things happened. Describe three different feelings that Jason had and explain what made him have those feelings.

One feeling is he felt curious cause he wanted to see what was in the box in the barn. Another feeling is he felt afraid because he lost the puppy he thought was for Megan. And wished he didn't open the box in the first place and listened to his mother. The last feeling is happiness that the puppy was for him and that the puppy was not lost. Another reason is he was lucky that he didn't ruin his sister's birthday party.

Scorer Comments:

Both responses demonstrate understanding of Jason's character by describing different feelings Jason had in the story and the events that caused him to have each of those feelings.

Essential - Student Response

11 From when Jason got up in the morning until he went to bed that night, his feelings changed as different things happened. Describe three different feelings that Jason had and explain what made him have those feelings.

When he woke up he was in a happy mood. When the party came he was scared that the puppy would not be found and at the end of the day he was happy again.

11 From when Jason got up in the morning until he went to bed that night, his feelings changed as different things happened. Describe three different feelings that Jason had and explain what made him have those feelings.

He had a good morning
He started to get curious
about the box
He felt bad, when the
puppy got away

Scorer Comments:

These responses demonstrate understanding of how Jason felt at different points in the story but only explain one feeling associated with Jason having lost the puppy.

Partial - Student Response

11 From when Jason got up in the morning until he went to bed that night, his feelings changed as different things happened. Describe three different feelings that Jason had and explain what made him have those feelings.

He was curious at first
Then he was sad.
Then he was happy.

11 From when Jason got up in the morning until he went to bed that night, his feelings changed as different things happened. Describe three different feelings that Jason had and explain what made him have those feelings.

One was that he was
very scared that he
would get in trouble
because the dog got
away

Another was when
he was at the party

And the last one was
he wanted to see what
was in the box

Scorer Comments:

The first response provides feelings Jason had at three different points in the story, but does not provide a cause for any of the feelings. The second response makes general reference to different parts of the story, but only describes one feeling and what caused Jason to have that feeling.

Unsatisfactory - Student Response

- 11 From when Jason got up in the morning until he went to bed that night, his feelings changed as different things happened. Describe three different feelings that Jason had and explain what made him have those feelings.

His mother told him
not to go in the
back yard.

- 11 From when Jason got up in the morning until he went to bed that night, his feelings changed as different things happened. Describe three different feelings that Jason had and explain what made him have those feelings.

Because the puppy ran out of the box

Scorer Comments:

Both responses provide story details; however, neither response provides a feeling that Jason had during the day.

Question 12

Acceptable - Student Response

12 What did Jason's father think Jason had learned? Tell what in the story makes you think so.

That you should listen to your parents. If he would have listened everything would be all right.

12 What did Jason's father think Jason had learned? Tell what in the story makes you think so.

I think Jason learned not to let his curiosity led him to things.

Scorer Comments:

Both responses use story details to explain what Jason's father thought Jason learned. The first response focuses on Jason learning to listen to his parents, while the second response refers to Jason learning how to handle his curiosity.

Unacceptable - Student Response

12 What did Jason's father think Jason had learned? Tell what in the story makes you think so.

His Dad found him in the street so he put him in the box

12 What did Jason's father think Jason had learned? Tell what in the story makes you think so.

Learned that dont be mad when it is not your birthday

Scorer Comments:

The first response merely states how Jason's father found the puppy but does not address what he thought Jason learned. The second response provides a lesson that is unrelated to events in the story.