

The River

Based on a true story

By Yetti Frenkel

"SH," WHISPERED ELISA. "I think she's coming!"

Elisa and Cory stifled their giggles and crouched behind the pine tree. Peeping out through the snow-covered branches, the children held their breath and listened for the tinkle of Minnie's collar as the old dog tried to find their hiding place. It was usually the hound's favorite game, but today the only sounds the children heard were the wind whistling softly across the frozen snow and ice cracking on the river.

Cory shivered with cold. "I wonder where she is," he said. "I hope she isn't off chasing a deer."

Elisa snorted. "Minnie's too lame for that. I bet she went home to wait where it's nice and warm."

Cory looked doubtful. "She wouldn't go home without us," he said. "Maybe she got ahead, and we didn't notice. Let's go to the bridge and see if she's there."

They started down the trail at a quick pace, glad to be moving again. The bare branches of the trees rattled forlornly as they tramped through the frozen snow.

Elisa struggled hard to keep up with her older brother. "Wouldn't it be easier to walk on the ice on the river?" she called to him.

Cory slowed his pace and waited for her to catch up. "It's too dangerous," he said. "The water is still flowing underneath, and the ice is thin. We might fall through." He held out a mittened hand. "I'll help you."

"No, thanks," said Elisa stubbornly. "I can keep up." But she was secretly glad when Cory walked beside her until they reached the bridge.

The old wooden bridge spanned the widest part of the river. In summer they often came here to fish or lie in the sun, but now it was a desolate, wind-swept place. They could hear the water gurgling softly beneath the ice as they looked out over the railing, hoping to glimpse Minnie walking along the bank.

Cory cupped his hands to his mouth and called, "Minnie, Min-nie!" His voice echoed back to him from the lonely woods. "I don't see her, Elisa. Do you?" he asked.

Just then Elisa gave a startled cry, and Cory turned sharply to see Minnie ten feet from shore. The old dog had fallen through the ice and was paddling in desperate circles.

"Hang on, Minnie, I'm coming!" Cory cried, racing toward the river. Elisa was already ahead of him, pulling off her coat, scarf, and mittens, ready to plunge in and save her dog. Blinded by tears, she stumbled out onto the ice.

Cory caught up with her and pulled her back. "Do you want to drown yourself?" he shouted. His face was white as he held out the warm clothes she'd dropped. "Put these back on and let me think of something." He looked grimly at the river.

Elisa sobbed as she struggled into her coat. "You can save her, can't you, Cory? She won't die, will she?"

"Of course not," he said, wishing he felt as confident as he was trying to sound.

The sight of her masters had given Minnie new hope, and she managed to get her front paws up on the ice. She scratched and clawed frantically at the slippery surface, but her hind legs were too arthritic to be of much help. For a moment her frightened brown eyes met Cory's, then she slipped back into the icy water and began wearily swimming once more.

Cory searched the bank until he found a long, twisted branch. Holding it firmly, he maneuvered the end until he had it hooked under Minnie's collar. "C'mon, girl," he said to the tired dog. She heaved her front paws onto the ice and struggled desperately while he tried to help her by pulling on the branch. But frost and moisture had made the wood brittle, and it snapped almost immediately. Once more Minnie struck out swimming, but now her head was barely above the surface of the water.

A terrible thought crossed Cory's mind — Minnie was going to drown before their eyes. It's not fair, he thought. Why doesn't someone come along to help us? He scanned the woods for a game warden or hunter, but saw no one. The woods were dark and silent, waiting. "I don't know what to do," he said, frightened.

"I know what to do," cried Elisa. "I'm going to help her!"

Once again Cory grabbed his sister's arm to prevent her from going out onto the ice. She bit and kicked at him like a small fury as tears of frustration ran down her cheeks.

"Listen to me!" yelled Cory. "I thought of something, but I need your help." Elisa wiped the tears from her face. "I'm going to lie down on the ice and try to crawl to Minnie. You lie down behind me and hold my ankles. Don't let go, no matter what, and don't stand up. Understand?" Elisa nodded, sniffing.

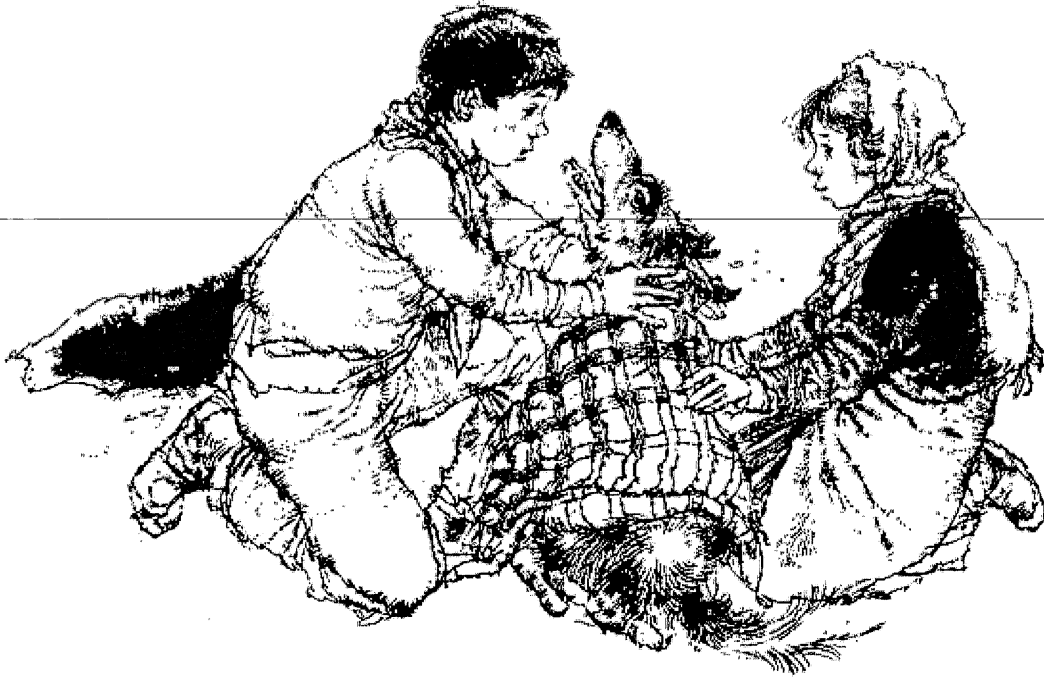
Cory lay on the ice so that his weight would be distributed more evenly and there would be less chance of breaking through. He felt Elisa's hands close around his ankles. As he inched his way forward, he could hear the water rushing beneath the ice. A few feet in front of him was the deep green hole where the dog had broken through. Cory's heart pounded with fear, but he bit his lip and kept going. At last he reached the edge of the hole and threw his arms around Minnie's neck. It felt reassuring to have a hold on her, but he soon realized that there was little else he could do. The ice was slippery, and every time he tried to pull her out, he began to slide forward himself.

"Have you got her?" called Elisa anxiously.

"Yes," Cory yelled over his shoulder, "but I can't—" Before he could explain, he found himself being pulled back across the ice with Minnie in his arms. He looked around in amazement, expecting to see a big man with a broad grin standing behind him, but there was only his sturdy little sister, laughing and crawling over the ice to throw her arms around the shivering dog. "How did you ever do that?" cried Cory. "You're not that strong!" Then as Minnie, tail wagging wildly, began to lick his face, he saw what had happened.

Elisa had put her wool coat down on the ice to protect her from the cold. The warmth of her body lying on the top of it had made the wool fibers stick firmly to the ice so that when she pulled on Cory's legs, he slipped across the surface to her as easily as a cork popping from a bottle.

Cory grinned in admiration. "You sure are one smart little sister!" he said, tousling her hair. He took off his plaid shirt and dried Minnie with it. "It's a good thing we were all together today," he said to the old dog softly as he rubbed her lopsided ears. She wagged her tail in agreement, and the three hurried toward the warmth of home without looking back.



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4. When Cory found out what had happened to Minnie, he

- A) blamed Elisa for not watching Minnie
- B) told Elisa not to try to get Minnie by herself
- C) sent Elisa home to get help for Minnie
- D) warned Elisa that Minnie might die

5. How might the story have ended differently if Elisa had not put her wool coat on the ice? Explain why.

6. Suggest another title for the story. Use examples from the story to explain why it would be a good title.

7. This story could best be described as a

- A) modern-day fairy tale
- B) mystery with a moral
- C) real-life adventure

D) science-fiction piece

8. Why did Cory think that Minnie would not survive? Use examples from the story to explain why.

9. The main problem Cory faced was

- A) convincing Elisa to keep her coat on
- B) finding a good hiding place from Minnie
- C) getting across the ice with Elisa before dark
- D) pulling Minnie out of the icy waters

Question 1

Evidence of full comprehension - Student Response

- 1 Do you think this story was exciting? Use an example from the story to explain why or why not.

Yes I think it was exciting because I wanted to know how they could save their dog. And they did they work together to get their dog out of the water.

- 1 Do you think this story was exciting? Use an example from the story to explain why or why not.

No, because when they had to pull Mummy out of the cold ice water, it was sad.

Scorer Comments:

Both responses use examples from the story to explain why the story was exciting. The first response supports a yes answer with details about working together to save the dog, while the second response supports a no answer with details about having to pull the dog out of cold, icy water.

Evidence of partial or surface comprehension - Student Response

- 1 Do you think this story was exciting? Use an example from the story to explain why or why not.

Yes, because every good story has some danger.

- 1 Do you think this story was exciting? Use an example from the story to explain why or why not.

yes because I like rescue stories.

Scorer Comments:

Both responses provide an opinion and support it with a general reference to the story. The first response claims that the story has some danger, but does not use examples to describe what is dangerous. The second response provides a general reference to the genre of the story that is not explained in terms of story events.

Evidence of little or no comprehension - Student Response

- 1 Do you think this story was exciting? Use an example from the story to explain why or why not.

I really think this story was neat just because it was so exciting. I even had to turn the page before it was over. This was really cool story I loved it, I hope to see it and more stories like this one

- 1 Do you think this story was exciting? Use an example from the story to explain why or why not.

It was exciting

Scorer Comments:

Both responses provide unsupported opinions about whether the story was exciting.

Question 2

Evidence of full comprehension - Student Response

- 2 What was one of the most important lessons that Cory and Elisa learned from their experience?

Cory and Elisa learned that they must not give up hope and keep trying.

- 2 What was one of the most important lessons that Cory and Elisa learned from their experience?

One of the most important lessons they learned was that working together they could save Minnie.

Scorer Comments:

Both responses describe an important lesson in a way that conveys a more universal understanding of Cory and Elisa's experience, as well as a logical interpretation of events in the story. The first response refers to their persistence, while the second focuses on their cooperative efforts.

Evidence of partial or surface comprehension - Student Response

- 2 What was one of the most important lessons that Cory and Elisa learned from their

experience?

Keep an eye on the dog.

- 2 What was one of the most important lessons that Cory and Elisa learned from their experience?

To never walk on thin ice.

Scorer Comments:

Both responses identify a superficial lesson that conveys an understanding of a trivial aspect of the story.

Evidence of little or no comprehension - Student Response

- 2 What was one of the most important lessons that Cory and Elisa learned from their experience?

Not to cross wood bridges.

- 2 What was one of the most important lessons that Cory and Elisa learned from their experience?

By saving the dog

Scorer Comments:

The first response identifies a lesson that is based on an inappropriate interpretation of events in the story. The second response does not identify a lesson at all.

Question 3

Evidence of extensive comprehension - Student Response

- 3 Tell how Elisa and Cory are alike and different. Use examples from the story to explain your opinion.

They are different because one was calm about the dog and one wasn't calm. They were alike because they both loved the dog and they both wanted to save her. I thought they were alike because at first they were both scared when they couldn't find her. They are very different because the girl wanted to take off her coat and save her.

- 3 Tell how Elisa and Cory are alike and different. Use examples from the story to explain your opinion.

Elisa wanted to go out on the ice right away, unlike Cory who thought of some way to get Minnie without going on the ice. They are alike because they both wanted to save their dog. Elisa is younger than Cory so she probably didn't know how dangerous the ice is. She was very wise to put her coat on the ground. Cory was grateful. They both were glad their dog is OK.

Scorer Comments:

Both responses go beyond obvious comparisons between Elisa and Cory to consider aspects of their character and behavior and provide appropriate examples from the story to support the comparison.

Evidence of essential comprehension - Student Response

- 3 Tell how Elisa and Cory are alike and different. Use examples from the story to explain your opinion.

Well Elisa is a girl and Cory is a boy. Cory was brave to do that. Elisa was brave too. Cory wanted his dog to live, so did Elisa. They both loved the dog the same as each other. Everyone is different.

- 3 Tell how Elisa and Cory are alike and different. Use examples from the story to explain your opinion.

Elisa is a girl and Cory is a boy. One is older than the other. One is smarter than the other. They have one dog. They bought one nice. One is smaller than the other.

Scorer Comments:

Both responses use aspects of Cory and Elisa to make a comparison. The first response states that both Cory and Elisa are brave, but does not provide an example from the story of how they were brave. The second response states that "one is smarter than the other" but does not provide an example from the story to support that character trait.

Evidence of partial comprehension - Student Response

- 3 Tell how Elisa and Cory are alike and different. Use examples from the story to explain your opinion.

Elisa and Cory are different because Elisa is a girl and Cory is a boy. They are alike because they're brother and sister and they both live together.

- 3 Tell how Elisa and Cory are alike and different. Use examples from the story to explain your opinion.

They are alike because they are brother and sister. They are different because they have different ideas.

Scorer Comments:

Both responses base comparisons on superficial aspects of Cory and Elisa by providing general comparisons such as gender.

Evidence of unsatisfactory comprehension - Student Response

- 3 Tell how Elisa and Cory are alike and different. Use examples from the story to explain your opinion.

Cory and Elisa are different because Elisa didn't want to go on the ice.

- 3 Tell how Elisa and Cory are alike and different. Use examples from the story to explain your opinion.

They were alike because they both like to fish and lie down. They are not alike, because they didn't like other things.

Scorer Comments:

Both responses provide inappropriate information from the story to suggest a comparison that is not based on an understanding of the story. The first response implies that Cory wanted to go on the ice. The second response bases a comparison on a superficial detail in the story.

Question 5

Evidence of full comprehension - Student Response

- 5 How might the story have ended differently if Elisa had not put her wool coat on the ice? Explain why.

The story might have ended differently because Minnie might have drowned because Elisa didn't have the wool fibers to pull them over the ice.

- 5 How might the story have ended differently if Elisa had not put her wool coat on the ice? Explain why.

Both Cory and Minnie would die because Elisa could not get help and leave the two stay in the water by there selfs.

Scorer Comments:

Both responses identify a logical alternative ending based on their understanding of story events. The first response explains the alternative ending by referring to how Elisa used her wool coat, while the second suggests that she had to use the coat because she could not leave to get help.

Evidence of partial or surface comprehension - Student Response

- 5 How might the story have ended differently if Elisa had not put her wool coat on the ice? Explain why.

Minnie and her dog might have drowned.

- 5 How might the story have ended differently if Elisa had not put her wool coat on the ice? Explain why.

she dog would have died

Scorer Comments:

Both responses provide an appropriate opinion of how the story might have ended differently, but neither supports the opinion with evidence from the story.

Evidence of little or no comprehension - Student Response

- 5 How might the story have ended differently if Elisa had not put her wool coat on the ice? Explain why.

The dog might have died if she didn't put her coat on Minnie. Because if she did not do put the coat on the dog the dog would stay cold.

- 5 How might the story have ended differently if Elisa had not put her wool coat on the ice? Explain why.

she would have got real real cold, and she would try to build a fire.

Scorer Comments:

Both responses provide an opinion of how the story might have ended differently, but do not offer a logical explanation based on Elisa's use of her wool coat on the ice.

Question 6

Evidence of full comprehension - Student Response

- 6 Suggest another title for the story. Use examples from the story to explain why it would be a good title.

The Rescue might be a good title because it's how two children saved their dog from drowning.

- 6 Suggest another title for the story. Use examples from the story to explain why it would be a good title.

The dog River
Because the dog got stuck in the ice-river.

Scorer Comments:

Both responses suggest an appropriate alternative title logically supported by examples from the story.

Evidence of partial or surface comprehension - Student Response

- 6 Suggest another title for the story. Use examples from the story to explain why it would be a good title.

Cory and Elisa to the rescue.

- 6 Suggest another title for the story. Use examples from the story to explain why it would be a good title.

Danger on the ice. Because there is danger on the ice.

Scorer Comments:

Both responses suggest an appropriate alternative title. However, the first response provides no supporting examples from the story, while the second response provides a circular explanation.

Evidence of little or no comprehension - Student Response

- 6 Suggest another title for the story. Use examples from the story to explain why it would be a good title.

Because it tells what is going to happen and what is one thing about the article that is why they named it The River.

- 6 Suggest another title for the story. Use examples from the story to explain why it would be a good title.

A Lot of Snow in the ground because
there was a lot of snow in the ground.

Scorer Comments:

The first response explains why the story is called *The River* but does not provide an alternative title. The second response suggests an alternative title that is based on a superficial aspect of the story.

Question 8

Evidence of full comprehension - Student Response

- 8 Why did Cory think that Minnie would not survive? Use examples from the story to explain why.

Because Cory thought Minnie
was going to drown before
they got there and Minnie's
legs were damaged

- 8 Why did Cory think that Minnie would not survive? Use examples from the story to explain why.

when the stick broke Minnie's head went
under the water, and that scared them badly. They
thought she was going to die

Scorer Comments:

Both responses identify a specific event or factor in the story that led Cory to believe that Minnie would not survive, and explain how this event or fact would have led to Minnie's death. The first response refers to Minnie's damaged legs, and the second refers to Cory and Elisa's fright when Minnie's head went under the water.

Evidence of partial or surface comprehension - Student Response

- 8 Why did Cory think that Minnie would not survive? Use examples from the story to explain why.

He thought Minnie would
freeze to death.

- 8 Why did Cory think that Minnie would not survive? Use examples from the story to explain why.

Cory did not think Minnie would
not survive because he thought
she was going to drowned

Scorer Comments:

Both responses refer to Cory's fear that Minnie would not survive, but do not explain how a specific event or fact led him to believe that Minnie would not survive.

Evidence of little or no comprehension - Student Response

- 8 Why did Cory think that Minnie would not survive? Use examples from the story to explain why.

because he did what was right.

- 8 Why did Cory think that Minnie would not survive? Use examples from the story to explain why.

It's a good thing we were all
together today!

Scorer Comments:

Both responses include inappropriate personal opinions that do not explain why Cory thought that Minnie would not survive.