

Name:

Date:

Before Reading “Raymond’s Run” By Toni Cade Bambara

A. Read each statement and decide if you agree or disagree. Circle a number from 1-6 to indicate your response.

1: Strongly Disagree

2: Disagree

3: Somewhat Disagree

4: Somewhat Agree

5: Agree

6: Strongly Agree

1. Your opponent is always your enemy.

1 2 3 4 5 6

2. You must practice a skill to be good at it.

1 2 3 4 5 6

3. You can never really be friends with your competition.

1 2 3 4 5 6

4. The best way to show you’re tough is physical confrontation.

1 2 3 4 5 6

5. Natural talent and ability only go so far.

1 2 3 4 5 6

6. Beating someone up will scare them away for good.

1 2 3 4 5 6

7. Most people struggle to be genuine around others.

1 2 3 4 5 6

8. If you hide from a fight, you are a coward.

1 2 3 4 5 6

9. People who have a lot to say, have a lot of insecurities.

1 2 3 4 5 6

10. Being confident can help you perform better athletically.

1 2 3 4 5 6

11. It’s OK to change who you are in order to please others.

1 2 3 4 5 6

12. To be the best, you have to beat the best.

1 2 3 4 5 6

13. You never know what positive things people are capable of.

1 2 3 4 5 6

14. Winning is important.

1 2 3 4 5 6

B. Pick one of the statements from above. Describe what score you chose on the “agree or disagree” scale for that statement and why. Explain your reasoning.

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“Raymond’s Run” By Toni Cade Bambara

Vocabulary

Word	Part of Speech	Definition
prodigy	noun	
ventriloquist	noun	
periscope	noun	
crouch	verb	
relay	noun	
liable	adjective	

Reading Comprehension Questions

1. Who is the narrator of this story? What two nicknames does he/she have and why?
2. How does the narrator help out his/her family instead of doing chores?
3. What are your thoughts on Squeaky? How does Squeaky describe herself?
4. Who is Gretchen?

5. What happens when Squeaky meets Gretchen and her friends on the street?

6. How does Squeaky feel about the May Day activities?

7. What is Squeaky's real name? Why does she demand Mr. Pearson write it down on the clipboard?

8. What does Mr. Pearson almost suggest Hazel do? Why does he stop?

9. What epiphany does Hazel have after she crosses the finish line?

10. Who wins the race?

11. What are Hazel's plans for after the race? How does she feel?

12. Why does Hazel realize she respects Gretchen?

Literary Analysis Questions

1. What is one example of *internal* conflict from the story?

2. What is one example of *external* conflict from the story?

3. What type of figurative language is used here? "*I could kill people like that.*" Why does Squeaky feel this way?

4. What imagery does the author use to describe Hazel's dream just before the race?

5. What are two examples of colloquialisms from the story? What effect do they have?

6. What is the meaning of the following idiom? "*There is not a big difference between herself and Raymond and she can't afford to throw stones.*"

7. What is the meaning of the following metaphor? "*The city is nothing but a concrete jungle.*"

8. What is one theme from the story?

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“Raymond’s Run” By Toni Cade Bambara
Analyze The Narrator: After Reading Analysis

Directions: Analyze the narrator Hazel aka Squeaky. Fill in all of the blank boxes. The first one is done for you.

Characteristic	Textual Evidence	Explanation
Determined	I continue with my breathing exercises, strolling down Broadway toward the ice man on 145th with not a care in the world cause I am Miss Quicksilver herself.	Squeaky practices all the time and continues her breathing exercises no matter what; winning is important to her.
Protective		
Confident		
Hopeful		
Different		
	So as far as everyone’s concerned, I’m the fastest and that goes for Gretchen, too, who has put out the tale that she is going to win the first-place medal this year. Ridiculous. In the second place, she’s got short legs. In the third place, she’s got freckles.	
	First I think I’ll step into the candy store and look over the new comics and let them pass. But that’s chicken and I’ve got a reputation to consider.	
	You’d think my mother’d be grateful not to have to make me a white organdy dress with a big satin sash and buy me new white baby-doll shoes that can’t be taken out of the box till the big day. Squeaky you must win, you must win, you are the fastest thing in the world, you can even beat your father up Amsterdam if you really try.	
	And by the time he comes over I’m jumping up and down so glad to see him—my brother Raymond, a great runner in the family tradition.	

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**“Raymond’s Run” By Toni Cade Bambara
Writing Menu**

Choose one writing option from below. Your response should be a minimum of two paragraphs.

1. Hazel shares that her responsibility to her family is to care for Raymond. What responsibilities do you have in your family? How is it helpful? How do you feel about your responsibilities?

2. How does Squeaky handle conflict? Is this similar or different to how you respond to conflict? Describe a difficult conflict you experienced (internal or external) and explain how you dealt with it.

3. Squeaky is protective of her brother Raymond. What is something or someone you are protective of and why? Explain how you are protective.

4. Squeaky’s opinions of Gretchen and Raymond change by the end of the story. Name a time that you misjudged someone before you got to know them. How and why did your opinion change of them?

5. Why do you think the story is called “Raymond’s Run”? Why not “Hazel’s Run”? Explain. What other titles do you think would have fit this story?

6. In the story “Raymond’s Run,” there are a lot of examples of regional dialect or slang. What slang words or example of dialect do you think you use? Have you ever been to a different state? Do they say things differently? Give examples of different slang around the world.

7. Research the Maypole dance history and Harlem, New York during the 1970s. What interesting information can you find? How does the historical context impact the story?

8. Squeaky didn’t understand why her mom wanted her to dance in the May Day Festival or even where a dress for that matter. What is something that makes you feel like an outsider? How do you handle being different?

ANSWERS

“Raymond’s Run” By Toni Cade Bambara

Word	Part of Speech	Definition
prodigy	noun	a person endowed with outstanding and exceptional abilities
ventriloquist	noun	an entertainer who makes their voice appear to come from a dummy of a person or animal
periscope	noun	an optical instrument which an observer can see what would otherwise be an obstructed field of view
crouch	verb	To get in a position where your knees are bent and you lean forward slightly
relay	noun	a race between teams usually of sprinters or swimmers, each team member in turn covering part of the total distance
liable	adjective	describes someone likely to do something

Reading Comprehension Questions

1. Who is the narrator of this story? What two nicknames does he/she have and why?

Squeaky is the narrator. She is a little girl with skinny arms and a squeaky voice. The older kids call her Mercury because she is so fast.

2. How does the narrator help out for her family instead of doing chores?

She takes care of her brother Raymond.

3. What are your thoughts on Squeaky? How does Squeaky describe herself?

She is tough, confident, practical, matter-of-fact, and protective. She describes herself as "a poor black girl who really can't afford to buy shoes and a new dress you only wear once a lifetime cause it won't fit next year."

4. Who is Gretchen?

She is Squeaky's biggest competition in the race this year. She is new.

5. What happens when Squeaky meets Gretchen and her friends on the street?

The girls try to make Squeaky feel bad by telling her she won't win the race this year, but Squeaky defends herself and does not let the conflict bother her.

6. How does Squeaky feel about the May Day activities?

She would rather focus on the race—she doesn't care much for the other activities. Particularly she doesn't want to participate in the May Pole Dancing, which she mentions is a standard expectation for the young girls to do. Squeaky does not want to wear a dress, a sash, and new shoes that her family really can't afford. She does not like dancing; she is passionate about running.

7. What is Squeaky's real name? Why does she demand Mr. Pearson write it down on the clipboard?

Hazel Elizabeth Deborah Parker is her real name. She wants to be treated with respect. She doesn't see why the teacher can call her by a nickname if she can't call him by one.

8. What does Mr. Pearson almost suggest Hazel do? Why does he stop?

He wants to tell her to let someone else win because she wins every year. He doesn't finish his sentence because Hazel gives him a look of disgust.

9. What epiphany does Hazel have after she crosses the finish line?

She realizes that Raymond is a really fast runner. He always keeps up with her. She realizes Raymond has a great future and she wants to help him get there.

10. Who wins the race?

Squeaky wins the race.

11. What are Hazel's plans for after the race? How does she feel?

She wants to help Raymond earn something he can call his own—like how she has her medals, trophies, and ribbons. He is a great runner, and she wants to coach him. She is happy and hopeful.

12. Why does Hazel realize she respects Gretchen?

Squeaky respects Gretchen because she is a great runner. They are a lot alike—both girls are hard working athletes who strive to be strong and resilient; they are both breaking stereotypes of females at the time.

Literary Analysis Questions

1. What is one example of *internal* conflict from the story?

-Squeaky must care for her brother Raymond who has some sort of disability. She loves Raymond and is protective of him, but at times she feels frustrated with him and annoyed by his behaviors.
-While she acts and talks confidently, she constantly feels as if she must prove herself to the world. She wants to hate Gretchen, but ultimately she respects her.

2. What is one example of *external* conflict from the story?

-Squeaky gets in a verbal confrontation with Gretchen and the other girls on the street.
-Squeaky competes against Gretchen in a race to win first place.

3. What type of figurative language is used here? "*I could kill people like that.*" Why does Squeaky feel this way?

It's a hyperbole. She is frustrated with people who pretend that everything comes naturally to them. She is not ashamed to say she works hard to achieve her goals. Others who act naturally gifted or talented is frustrating for her because she's an incredible runner, but it's because she is disciplined and practices all the time.

4. What imagery does the author use to describe Hazel's dream just before the race?

Hazel dreams that she is flying over the beach and that she can *smell* the apples in the trees, She dreams she can *feel* the wind as she is soaring through the sky, and she feels light like a feather. Readers can see and imagine the country she describes, as well as the trees, the fields of the corn, and the hill to the orchard.

5. What are two examples of colloquialisms from the story? What effect do they have?

Answers will vary.

"And I don't have to earn my pocket money by hustling."

"But of course he does, cause if he hangs back someone's liable to walk up to him..."

"After all, with a little more study I can beat Cynthia and her phony self at the spelling bee."

"And a lot of smart mouths got lots to say about that too."

"...here comes Gretchen and her sidekicks..."

"Rosie, trying to signify with her hands on her hips all salty, completely forgetting that I have whipped her behind many times for less salt than that."

"...who has put out the tale that she is going to win the first-place medal this year."

"I'm ready to fight, cause like I said I don't feature a whole lot of chit-chat."

"Dig that."

The slang used gives readers insight to Harlem in the 1970s and showcases a sense of reality. The slang Squeaky uses highlights her fiery attitude and youth; it shows how Squeaky is authentic.

6. What is the meaning of the following idiom? "*There is not a big difference between herself and Raymond and she can't afford to throw stones.*"

It means you shouldn't criticize someone else when you have faults yourself. Squeaky is saying that Rosie is not that smart, so she shouldn't be picking on Raymond.

7. What is the meaning of the following metaphor? "*The city is nothing but a concrete jungle.*"

A concrete jungle describes a city or urban area with large buildings where it is dangerous to live, like in the jungle.

8. What is one theme from the story?

Answers will vary.

- If you work hard at something, you will achieve great things.
- Practice, focus, and dedication allow you to reach your goals.
- You're only the best if you can beat the best.
- Great competition can push you to work harder and be better.
- Be true to yourself no matter how different you feel.
- Accept others for who they are.
- Be open to others and people may surprise you.

ANSWERS

Characteristic	Evidence	Explanation
Determined	I continue with my breathing exercises, strolling down Broadway toward the ice man on 145th with not a care in the world cause I am Miss Quicksilver herself.	Squeaky practices all the time and continues her breathing exercises no matter what; winning is important to her.
Protective	...if anybody has anything to say to Raymond, anything to say about his big head, they have to come by me.	Squeaky doesn't let anyone make fun of her brother or she will fight them.
Confident	There is no track meet that I don't win the first-place medal. I used to win the twenty-yard dash when I was a little kid in kindergarten. Nowadays, it's the fifty yard dash. And tomorrow I'm subject to run the quarter-meter relay all by myself and come in first, second, and third.	Squeaky knows she has great talent and she knows she works hard. If she continues practicing, she knows she will continue to be the best.
Hopeful	So I stand there with my new plans, laughing out loud by this time as Raymond jumps down from the fence and runs over with his teeth showing and his arms down to the side.	Squeaky is hopeful for the future. She knows she can coach Raymond to be a great runner.
Different	...we don't practice real smiling every day, you know, cause maybe we too busy being flowers or fairies or strawberries instead of something honest and worthy of respect . . . you know . . . like being people.	Squeaky feels like an outsider because she does not fit the gender roles for the time period. She feels passionate about running and being a strong athlete.
Immature/ Defensive	So as far as everyone's concerned, I'm the fastest and that goes for Gretchen, too, who has put out the tale that she is going to win the first-place medal this year. Ridiculous. In the second place, she's got short legs. In the third place, she's got freckles. In the first place, no one can beat me and that's all there is to it.	Squeaky's insulting comments toward the other characters show her age and that she is a little bit worried about the competition.
Stubborn	First I think I'll step into the candy store and look over the new comics and let them pass. But that's chicken and I've got a reputation to consider.	Squeaky has something to prove. She can't let people think she's weak.
Practical/ unappreciated	You'd think my mother'd be grateful not to have to make me a white organdy dress with a big satin sash and buy me new white baby-doll shoes that can't be taken out of the box till the big day.	Squeaky thinks the dancing tradition is a waste of money and wishes her mom would appreciate how she doesn't have to spend money on just one day.
Brave/ independent	Squeaky you must win, you must win, you are the fastest thing in the world, you can even beat your father up Amsterdam if you really try.	Squeaky is her own biggest advocate. She talks herself into being prepared for the race, even though it may scare her.
Proud/grateful	And by the time he comes over I'm jumping up and down so glad to see him—my brother Raymond, a great runner in the family tradition.	Squeaky is proud of Raymond for his attitude and abilities. She is grateful she gets to spend time with him, even if it is difficult sometimes.