

Question and Answers

1. What does the author notice one Sunday afternoon? What is his mother's reaction? What does she do?

A. While he was doing his homework, Zan saw smoke coming in through the ceiling. The room was full of smoke in a few seconds. They rushed out of the house and saw that the roof was on fire. Zan's mother ran inside and rescued some documents. She went again to get his father's photographs and letters which were his only memories with them.

2. Why does he break down in tears after the fire?

A. Zan felt that everything was going the wrong way. He was in a new school, did not have his friends. Now, the fire snatched all his possessions, namely, his house, clothes, books and even his pet cat.

3. Why is the author deeply embarrassed the next day in school? Which words show his fear and insecurity?

A. The author was embarrassed because he did not have his shoes, his clothes were unusual. He did not have his school bag and books. The words showing his fear and insecurity are - I was totally embarrassed by everything. The clothes I was wearing looked weird, I had no books or homework, and my backpack was gone. I had my life in that backpack! The more I tried to fit in, the worse it got. Was I destined to be an outcast and a geek all my life? That's what it felt like. I didn't want to grow up, change or have to handle life if it was going to be this way. I just wanted to curl up and die.

4. The cat and the author are very fond of each other. How has this been shown in the story? Where was the cat after the fire? Who brings it back and how?

A. The cat and its master, Zan were attached to each other. Every morning Zan would disturb the cat and wake it. The cat would follow him, climb up his robe, sit in his pocket and sleep there. The cat would remain with Zan all the time. While he studied, it would hit its tail on his pen for entertainment.

5. What actions of the schoolmates change the author's understanding of life and people, and comfort him emotionally? How does his loneliness vanish and how does he start participating in life?

A. Zan's classmates were sympathetic and understood his situation. They arranged all necessities for him like clothes, books, stationary items. They invited him over to their place. All this comforted Zan. He came out of the negativity and made new friends. He realized that he was getting a new life.

6. What is the meaning of "My cat was back and so was I"? Had the author gone anywhere? Why does he say that he is also back?

A. "My cat was back and so was I" means that just like Zan got his cat back, similarly, he also got a new life. He came out of the gloom that had surrounded him. No, he had not gone anywhere. He says that he was back which implies that he got a new life which was full of affection and warmth.

Short Answer Type

Question 1.

Why did the writer feel awkward during her first year of high school?

Answer:

She felt awkward because it was a new school, much bigger than her previous junior high school. It was strange starting as a freshman after enjoying the benefits of being the senior-most class in junior high. She also felt isolated as all her close friends had gone to different high schools and she did not know anyone there.

Question 2.

Why did she continue to visit her old school?

Answer:

She missed her teachers so much that she continued to visit them at her old school. Moreover, it was a familiar place where she had spent many happy years. She felt isolated in her new school without her friends.

Question 3.

What advice did her junior high teachers give her?

Answer:

They encouraged her to get involved with activities in her new school so that she could meet new people. They were confident that she would adjust in time and start loving the new school as well.

Question 4.

What was the psychology behind the teachers' advice?

Answer:

The teachers wanted her to adjust to her new environment and not keep thinking about the past. It was time for her to move on and face the reality of her situation.

Question 5.

How do we know that her cat was very playful?

Answer:

We know this from the fact that she would swat at the writer's pen from time to time in a playful manner while she tried to complete her homework.

Question 6.

Why was the cat so attached to the writer?

Answer:

The writer had saved the cat when it had been a kitten and somehow it knew that the writer was responsible for the good life that it was presently enjoying.

Question 7.

What happened one Sunday afternoon?

Answer:

The writer's house caught fire one Sunday, and it burnt down completely.

Question 8.

Why did the writer's mother run back into the burning house?

Answer:

The writer's father had died when she had been very young. Her mother ran back into the burning house to try to save her husband's pictures and letters, which were all she had to remember him by.

Question 9.

Why was the writer held back by the fireman?

Answer:

She was held back by the fireman to stop her from following her mother into the burning house, as she could have lost her life.

Question 10.

How was the writer's mother rescued from the burning house?

Answer:

The fire-fighters ran into the house and rescued the writer's mother. She was given an oxygen mask to help her breathe normally again.

Question 11.

How long did it take to bring the fire under control? Was the house habitable? Give

reasons for your answer.

Answer:

It took five hours to bring the fire under control. No, the house was completely burnt down, so it was not habitable.

Question 12.

What did the writer realise when they were leaving the site of the burnt house? How did she feel?

Answer:

She realised that her cat was nowhere to be seen. She felt miserable as the fireman would not allow her to go into the house to look for her.

Question 13.

Where did the writer and her mother go after their house burnt down?

Answer:

They went to the writer's grandparents' house to spend the night. Later, they rented an apartment till the old house was rebuilt.

Question 14.

Why does the writer say that she walked around her school like a zombie?

Answer:

She says this because the burning down of her house had been so sudden that it came as a shock to her. She had still not come to terms with it. Along with this, she had to wear borrowed clothes and shoes. All the security she had known, her old school, her friends, her house, and her cat, had all been ripped away from her, leaving her feeling desolate and empty.

Question 15.

What shocked the writer on her visit to the site of her burnt house?

Answer:

She was shocked to see the extent of damage caused by the fire, as well as the water and chemicals used during the rescue operation.

Question 16.

Why does the writer say that she had no time to grieve?

Answer:

She says this because she and her mother had to start life afresh at once. They had to find a new place to live and buy some clothes for school. They did not have time to spend feeling sad about what they had lost.

Question 17.

Who did they borrow money from? Why?

Answer:

They had to borrow money from her grandparents, because all the credit cards, cash,

and even their identification papers had been burnt in the fire. Hence, withdrawing money from the bank was also difficult.

Question 18.

Why did the writer often go back to the site of the debris?

Answer:

She went there in the hope of finding her cat, which had gone missing on the night of the fire.

Question 19.

Why does the writer say that bad news travels fast?

Answer:

She says this because she realised that everyone at school, including her teachers and classmates, were aware of her plight.

Question 20.

How did the writer feel about people knowing about her bad luck?

Answer:

She felt embarrassed, as if she had been responsible for the accident. She was not happy with the attention she was getting because of it.

Question 21.

What surprised the writer in school the day after her house burnt down?

Answer:

She was surprised to see people crowding around her before gym class and asking her to hurry up. It seemed as if they were trying to shove her into the gym.

Question 22.

What surprised the writer on entering the gym?

Answer:

She was surprised to see a big table set up with all kinds of things for her, including school supplies, notebooks, and clothes.

Question 23.

How did the writer feel on seeing the gifts on the gym table?

Answer:

She was overwhelmed with emotions, the genuine outpouring of concern touched her and for the first time she made friends and felt accepted in high school.

Question 24.

What were the changes that took place in the life of the writer from the time her house burnt, till it was rebuilt?

Answer:

She no longer felt lonely. She had made new friends in the school, had become more open and accepting of the changes that had taken place. She no longer felt so insecure.

Question 25.

Why had the woman been trying to contact the writer?

Answer:

The writer's cat had run away far from the house on the day that it had burnt down. The cat was found by the lady, who saw the telephone number on the cat's collar and tried to contact the writer.

Long Answer Type

Question 1.

What are the changes observed in the writer's attitude from the time her house is burnt, till it is rebuilt?

Answer:

In the beginning, before her house was burnt, the writer was unhappy in her new school. She felt awkward and lonely starting as a freshman after having been a senior in junior high. She found it difficult to relate to her classmates and teachers, and continued to visit her old teachers, who she missed terribly.

After the fire, she was deeply touched by the generosity and kindness shown by her new school mates and teachers. She was overwhelmed, and started opening up to them, making new friends. The tragedy thus helped her to mature and become more open and accepting of the changes that were taking place. She was no longer insecure.

Question 2.

Would you call the lady who returned the cat a kind and sensitive person? Give reasons for your answer.

Answer:

Yes, the lady who returned the cat was definitely sensitive, because she allowed the cat into her house and took care of him. She understood that it must have strayed from its home, and needed to be cared for. Secondly, she realised that it was loved by someone who must be desperately trying to locate it. It was very selfless and generous on her part to try and locate the owners. She took a lot of time and trouble to reunite the cat with its family, without expecting anything in return.

Question 3.

What kind of a relationship did the writer share with her mother? Give reasons to support your answer.

Answer:

The writer was very close to her mother. Her father had died years ago, and the only immediate family she had was her mother. Even though it is mentioned that there had been times when she felt as though she hated her mother, it is clear that the fire brought

them closer. They supported each other as they rebuilt their lives, both physically and emotionally.

The writer's mother had run into the house to rescue her husband's letters and photos. At that point, the writer had been so relieved when the firemen brought her mother out safely, that she ran up and hugged her. She accepted the changes that were inevitable as a result of the tragedy, and supported her mother in every way she could.

Question 4.

The cat and the writer are very fond of each other. How has this been shown in the story? Where was the cat after the fire? Who brings it back and how?

Answer:

We know that the writer and the cat were very fond of each other because they were always together. Even when she did her homework, the cat would sit on top of her papers, purring loudly and occasionally swatting at her pen for entertainment. Also, in the mornings, when the writer would disturb it, the cat would climb into the pocket of the writer's robe and go to sleep.

After the fire, when the cat disappeared, the writer missed it terribly. The cat had been so frightened of the fire that it had run off over a mile away, where it was rescued by a kind- hearted woman. Even though the writer's phone number was written on the cat's collar, the lady was not able to contact the writer because the phone had been destroyed in the fire. The lady did not give up, but worked hard to find the cat's family, as it was clear that the cat had been deeply loved, and must be sorely missed by its owner.

Question 5.

What actions of the writer's schoolmates change her understanding of life and people, and comfort her emotionally?

Answer:

The fact that her schoolmates got together and collected school supplies, notebooks, clothes like jeans, tops and sweatsuits for her affected the writer deeply. She was touched and overwhelmed that people who had never even spoken to her before came up and introduced themselves. She got several invitations to their homes, and their genuine outpouring of concern made her feel a little less lost and sad. She felt more accepted and her loneliness vanished.

Question 6.

What is the meaning of the sentence "My cat was back, and so was I"? Had the writer gone somewhere? Why does she say that she is also back?

Answer:

The writer means to say that the return of her cat marked an end to the period of loss and loneliness that she and her mother had been experiencing since their house burnt down. In the fire, the writer and her mother had lost all their possessions, and for a

month they had to survive on charity and donations from acquaintances and family members like her grandparents and aunt.

However, by the time the cat was returned to her by a kind lady who had rescued it and traced its family, the writer had made many friends in her new school, and regained her self-worth. She was once again in control of her life and secure in the acceptance and love of the people around her. With the return of her cat, it was as though her new life was now complete again.