

Read "A Momentary Mystery Aboard the Orange Blossom Special" before answering the questions that follow.

## A Momentary Mystery Aboard the Orange Blossom Special

by Mona Gedney

### Cast of Characters

- 1 Della: a twelve-year-old girl
- Lee: a ten-year-old boy, Della's brother
- Mrs. Alexander: the mother of Della and Lee
- Mrs. Bateman: an older woman traveling to Miami

### SCENE I

- 2 SETTING: *[The scene is the compartment of a sleeping car on the Orange Blossom Special as it rolls toward Florida. Three people are sleeping in the berths, one in an upper and one in each of the lower ones. The compartment is dark, but there is light from the moon reflected on the snow-covered fields the train is passing. It is late on a winter's night in 1940.]*
- 3 AT RISE: *[The door to the compartment opens silently from the outside, and a shaft of light shines in. Della suddenly sits up in her lower berth, and the door closes with a quiet snap. Mrs. Alexander and Lee continue to sleep. Della hurries to the door of the compartment, opens it quietly, and looks out. She stands peering out for a moment, then closes it carefully. She goes to the foot of her berth by the window and curls up there. It is beginning to snow once more. She rests her head against the window and goes to sleep. Blackout. End of scene]*

### SCENE II

- 4 SETTING: *[It is now early morning. Mrs. Alexander awakens and looks around the compartment sleepily, then sits up straight when she sees her daughter asleep at the window.]*
- 5 MRS. ALEXANDER: Della, why aren't you in bed, dear?
- 6 DELLA: *[Opening her eyes and yawning lazily.]* Oh, I don't know, Mom. *[Suddenly she remembers what happened the night before and sits up straight.]* Didn't you hear that noise last night?
- 7 MRS. ALEXANDER: What noise, Della? We're on a train, after all. You have to expect noise.

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- 8 **DELLA:** *[Shaking her head impatiently.]* No, this was different. Someone opened the door to our compartment and looked in. It could have been a thief! We could have been robbed!
- 9 **MRS. ALEXANDER:** Nonsense, dear! You've been reading too many mystery stories. *[She stands up, pats her daughter reassuringly on the shoulder, and picks up her cosmetic case.]* I'm going to get dressed now, and then we'll go to the diner. You'll feel better after you have breakfast.
- 10 **LEE:** *[He emerges from his blankets and looks around.]* I know I will. *[He rolls over and stares at Della.]* Why do you need to feel better, Dell? Are you sick?
- 11 **DELLA:** *[Snappishly.]* No, I'm not sick, Lee.
- 12 **LEE:** *[Rolling his eyes.]* Well, pardon me! Next time I won't ask.
- 13 **DELLA:** I'm sure it happened, even though Mom thinks it was my imagination.
- 14 **LEE:** *[Now curious.]* Thinks what was your imagination, Della? What happened? What doesn't Mom believe?
- 15 **DELLA:** Someone opened the door to our compartment last night. They would have come in, too, if I hadn't awakened.
- 16 **LEE:** *[Really excited now.]* Did you see them? Could you pick them out if you saw them again?
- 17 **DELLA:** *[Shaking her head uneasily.]* I didn't really see anyone—just a shadow, and I thought it was some thief who was going to rob us while we were sleeping.
- 18 **LEE:** *[Swinging out of his upper berth and snatching clothes from his suitcase.]* A thief! This is terrific, Dell! And I thought this was going to be a boring trip! Get up and get dressed so that we can go eat! Maybe our thief's in the dining car! *[Blackout. End of scene.]*

### SCENE III

- 19 **SETTING:** *[The scene is the dining car of the Orange Blossom Special a little later the same morning. It is no longer snowing. The tables in the car are covered with white linen tablecloths, and waiters in immaculate uniforms are serving steaming dishes from silver trays. Every table is filled, and the diners are well-dressed. Mrs. Alexander, Della, and Lee are being seated at a table with Mrs. Bateman.]*
- 20 **MRS. ALEXANDER:** *[Smiling at Mrs. Bateman.]* I do hope you don't mind our joining you. It appears that everyone came to breakfast early this morning.
- 21 **MRS. BATEMAN:** *[Returning the smile in a friendly manner.]* Not at all. I'm glad to have the company. In fact, meeting new people is one of the things I enjoy most about train travel. I'm Mrs. Abigail Bateman.

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- 22 **MRS. ALEXANDER:** I am Mrs. Louise Alexander, and these are my children, Della and Lee. Say hello to Mrs. Bateman. *[The children murmur politely and then give their attention to their menus while the women talk.]*
- 23 **MRS. ALEXANDER:** Do you travel a great deal, Mrs. Bateman?
- 24 **MRS. BATEMAN:** Indeed I do. Why, I travel thousands of miles every year, but this is my favorite journey. There is nothing like getting on the train in the cold of New York City and arriving in sunny Miami less than two days later. Aren't trains wonderful? They are the fastest and best way to travel!
- 25 **MRS. ALEXANDER:** *[Nodding in agreement.]* The children and I were tired of the snow, too. Just seeing the orange stripes on the Orange Blossom Special made us feel like we were already halfway to the Sunshine State.
- 26 **LEE:** *[Enthusiastically.]* Did you know that they've even written a song about it? About the Orange Blossom Special, I mean? *[He begins a lusty rendition of it, but his mother stops him hastily.]*
- 27 **MRS. ALEXANDER:** Yes, it's a very nice song, Lee, but let's not sing it now.
- 28 **LEE:** *[He starts to give his attention to the orange juice that has just arrived, but then he notices Mrs. Bateman's diamond ring.]* Say, you'd better put that ring in a safe place if you don't want it stolen. *[Mrs. Bateman stares at him, startled, and his mother sighs. Della nods her head in agreement.]*
- 29 **DELLA:** Someone tried to rob us last night!
- 30 **MRS. BATEMAN:** *[Staring at her with raised eyebrows.]* Someone tried to rob you? Here, on the Orange Blossom Special? *[Della and Lee nod their heads in unison, but their mother shakes her head in disagreement.]*
- 31 **MRS. ALEXANDER:** *[Apologetically.]* I'm afraid that both of my children have overactive imaginations, Mrs. Bateman. They've been listening to scary radio shows and reading too many mystery novels.
- 32 **DELLA:** *[Indignant at what she considers a false accusation.]* Well, I did see someone open the door to our compartment in the middle of the night! *[There is a brief pause, and then Mrs. Bateman gives a slight, embarrassed laugh.]*
- 33 **MRS. BATEMAN:** *[Speaking hesitantly.]* As a matter of fact, Della, I think that you are quite right. I believe that you did see someone open the door.
- 34 **DELLA:** *[Looking at her mother triumphantly.]* Did someone open the door to your compartment, too?
- 35 **MRS. BATEMAN:** *[Shaking her head in embarrassment.]* No, I'm afraid that I was probably the one who opened the door to your compartment. I do apologize for frightening you. *[The other three stare at her in astonishment.]*

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- 36 **MRS. ALEXANDER:** Did you open our door by mistake, thinking it was your compartment?
- 37 **MRS. BATEMAN:** *[Shaking her head.]* I'm afraid that I was sleepwalking again. It happens occasionally, and last night the porter said that he saw me in the passageway. He asked if he could help me, but I didn't answer him. I just walked back to my own compartment. *[She looks at them ruefully.]* I do apologize for upsetting you.
- 38 **LEE:** *[Crumpling his napkin in disgust.]* No thief! Just when I thought something exciting was going to happen!
- 39 **DELLA:** *[Smiling at Mrs. Bateman.]* You shouldn't apologize to us, Mrs. Bateman. Lee's right—things were exciting for a little while. A momentary mystery was better than no mystery at all. *[Blackout. End of scene.]*

Use "A Momentary Mystery Aboard the Orange Blossom Special" to answer questions 1-8.

- 1 Read from line 39 of the play.

*A momentary mystery was better than no mystery at all.*

Which word is most similar in meaning to the word momentary in this line?

- A** Frightening
- B** Unsolved
- C** Brief
- D** Funny
- 2 In what way are Della and Lee alike?
- F** Both of them enjoy excitement.
- G** Both of them dislike Mrs. Bateman.
- H** Both of them dislike the snow.
- J** Both of them enjoy train journeys.

- 3 Which of the following is the best summary of the Scene II?

- A** Della is sleeping against the window, and her mother gets worried that there's something wrong.
- B** Della's mother doesn't believe that there's a thief on the train and tells her to stop reading so many mysteries.
- C** Della tells her mother and brother that there's a thief on the train.
- D** Della's brother believes that there's a criminal on the train and gets excited.

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- 4 What is the author's main purpose in writing this play?
- F To entertain with a play about traveling
  - G To describe the dangers of sleepwalking on a train
  - H To tell about traveling aboard the Orange Blossom Special
  - J To explain the reasons for traveling south for the winter
- 5 Read from line 26 of the play.

*Did you know that they've even written a song about it? About the Orange Blossom Special, I mean? [He begins a lusty rendition of it, but his mother stops him hastily.]*

What does the word hastily mean in this line?

- A Quickly
- B Slowly
- C Recklessly
- D Excitedly

- 6 With which statement below would the author of this play most likely agree?
- F Traveling on the Orange Blossom Special is an enjoyable experience.
  - G The Orange Blossom Special is not a well-known train.
  - H Traveling on the Orange Blossom Special is sometimes a frightening experience.
  - J The Orange Blossom Special is the scene of many mysteries.
- 7 Which is the best evidence that Lee enjoys mysteries?
- A Lee sings a song about the Orange Blossom Special.
  - B Lee tells Mrs. Bateman about the thief.
  - C Lee hurries to get dressed to go to breakfast.
  - D Lee is excited when Della tells him about the thief.
- 8 What is one way in which the setting of Scene III is different from Scene I?
- F They are seated in the club car.
  - G It is now afternoon instead of night.
  - H They are now in Florida.
  - J It is no longer snowing.



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Item Number	Reporting Category	Readiness or Supporting	Content Student Expectation	Correct Answer
<b>READING Selection 1</b>				
1	1	Readiness	7.2 (A)	C
2	2	Supporting	7.5 Fig.19 (D)	F
3	2	Supporting	7.5 Fig.19 (E)	C
4	2	Supporting	7.5 Fig.19 (D)	F
5	1	Readiness	7.2 (B)	A
6	2	Supporting	7.5 Fig.19 (D)	F
7	2	Supporting	7.4 Fig.19 (D)	D
8	2	Supporting	7.5 Fig.19 (E)	J