

Reading Comprehension: How the First Letter Was Written

Directions: Read the story below. Then answer the questions.

Answer Key:

How the First Letter Was Written

Once upon a very early time there was a man **who lived in a cave. His name was Tegumai** and he was a happy man. His wife was named Teshumai. Their little daughter was named Taffy and she followed her father everywhere.

One day, Tegumai and Taffy went fishing in the river beyond the beaver swamp, far away from the cave. Tegumai had brought his special wooden fishing spear. Before he had caught any fish at all, **he threw his spear too hard and broke it in two.** This was a problem, since Tegumai had forgotten to bring any extra spears.

“I’ll go to the cave and get your extra spear,” Taffy said.

“No,” said her father. “It is too far for your little legs and you might fall into the beaver swamp.” With that, Tegumai began to mend his spear.

Taffy sat down on the bank of the river. She thought about how convenient it would be if she could write. She could write a letter to her mother, who would send the extra spear to them. But writing had not been invented yet.

Just then a Stranger-man appeared on the shore of the river. He smiled at little Taffy, because he had a small daughter himself.

Taffy saw the Stranger-man and had an idea. “You should go to my mother and get the extra spear,” she said. “You’ll want my mother’s address. I can’t read but I can draw pictures.”

The Stranger-man smiled politely. He did not speak her language and had not understood a word Taffy had said. He saw that Tegumai ignored him. This made him believe Tegumai must be a great chief, who was too proud and powerful to notice a simple visitor.

Taffy promptly began drawing pictures on tree bark with a shark’s tooth to tell her mother what had happened. She drew Tegumai trying to fish with a broken spear. She drew the Stranger-man holding the extra spear. Just then, the shark’s tooth slipped and it looked like the spear was in Tegumai’s back.

“Now I’ll show you how to find my mother’s address,” Taffy told the Stranger-man. She drew trees and the beaver swamp. Taffy did not know how to draw beavers, but she could draw heads, so she drew little heads in the swamp.

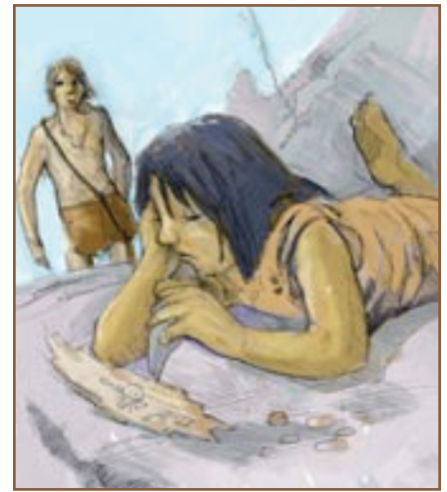
When she finished her picture, Taffy thought it was beautiful. She handed it to the Stranger-man.

“This must be a message to the proud chief’s tribe,” Stranger-man thought. “It must mean that his enemies are hiding in the bushes ready to attack him. He wants his tribe to come and help him!” With that the Stranger-man raced off with the pictures on the tree bark.

The Stranger-man ran and ran, and quite by accident found Teshumai at the door of her cave, where she was talking with the other cave ladies. He walked up, smiled politely and handed her the tree bark full of pictures.

Teshumai looked at the pictures and screamed. She ran and knocked the poor Stranger-man down! The ladies sat on him, while Teshumai told them what the pictures meant.

“It’s quite clear,” she said. **“This Stranger-man has attacked Tegumai! See, there is a spear in Tegumai’s**



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back and Tegumai's spear is broken." Then Teshumai pointed to the many little beaver heads Taffy had drawn and said "Look, there's the other tribe coming after them!" Teshumai and the cave ladies began to beat the drums to call the tribe.

The tribe gathered, ready to rescue Tegumai and Taffy. The Stranger-man led them to where Tegumai and Taffy were peacefully fishing.

"Where are the people that attacked you?" cried the Tribe of Tegumai.

"No one attacked us," said Tegumai. "We've seen nobody but that Stranger-man you have there."

"Why did you send us these horrible pictures?" they asked.

Taffy stepped forward. She told the tribe about the broken spear and her plan to help her father. She explained her drawings and that she couldn't draw beavers at all, just heads.

When she finished, everyone was very quiet. Then the head chief began to laugh. Soon, the whole tribe laughed.

"This is a great invention," said Head Chief. "Someday we will be able to read and write and we shall always understand what is written. Until then, Taffy, when you send a letter with pictures, be sure to send it with someone who can explain what it means!"



1. Who offered to go to the cave to get the extra spear?

Underline your answer in red.



2. What caused the fishing spear to break?

Underline your answer in green.



3. When did Taffy have the idea to send a message to her mom?

Underline your answer in blue.



4. Where did Tegumai live?

Underline your answer in orange.



5. Why did Teshumai think her family was under attack?

Underline your answer in purple.



6. How did Taffy communicate with her mother?

Underline your answer in black.