

Reading Comprehension Worksheet

Read the passage. Then answer each question.

QUEEN HULDA AND THE FLAX

There was once a poor peasant named Hans. He lived with his wife and children in a valley at the foot of a snow-capped mountain.

Hans often drove his sheep to pasture up the mountain side. He always carried his crossbow with him to protect the sheep. He was a skillful marksman.

Once in a while, Hans would shoot a deer. The deer meat would serve as food for his family for many days.

One day Hans was watching his sheep while they grazed on the mountain side. Suddenly a deer appeared. Its spreading antlers glittered in the morning sunlight with wonderful brightness.

The deer bounded across the pasture to the rocks higher up the mountain. Hans followed quickly, hoping to approach near enough to shoot an arrow. From rock to rock, higher and higher, Hans followed the deer until at last they were at the summit of the mountain.

They sped over the snow until the deer disappeared. Hans followed more slowly along a dark and narrow tunnel. Suddenly he caught a glimpse of a bright light in the distance. He walked on and soon reached a brightly lit cave. From the walls and ceiling of the cave hung many wonderful crystals and precious stones.

A tall woman dressed in pure white stood in the midst of the cave. A golden girdle was fastened about her waist. A crown set with jewels rested on her head. In her hand she held a bunch of blue flowers.

Lovely maidens in dainty robes with graceful wreaths of Alpine roses on their heads attended their queen.

Overcome with wonder, Hans knelt before the beautiful woman. As if in a dream, he heard her say very softly, "Choose for yourself what you will of my treasures--gold, or silver, or precious stones."

"Most gracious queen," replied Hans, "I ask only for the flowers in your hand." The queen was pleased, and she gave the flowers to Hans at once.

"You have chosen well," said she. "Also take these seeds and sow them in your fields."

Suddenly a peal of thunder shook the grotto. When it had ceased, Hans found himself standing alone on the mountain.

When Hans reached home, he showed his wife the blue flowers and the seeds that had been given him by the queen. "Wonderful crystals and precious stones hang from the walls and ceiling of the cave, but the queen is more beautiful than all!" exclaimed Hans.

"Why did you not choose some of the diamonds and gold?" asked his wife, and she scolded Hans roundly because he had taken only flowers and seeds.

Hans made no reply, but he went to the fields and plowed the ground. Then he carefully sowed the seeds that the queen had given him.

The weeks passed by. Tiny green leaves began to show above the ground. The plants grew taller and taller, and then the blue flowers began to appear. The flowers were so beautiful that even the angry wife was pleased. She had never seen anything like them.

Hans watched his fields day and night. One moonlight night, he saw the lovely queen from the cave walking about among the flowers with her maidens. They seemed to be guarding the blossoms.

At last the flowers had withered, and the seeds were ripe. Then the queen appeared at the cottage door.

The queen said, "I am Queen Hulda. I have come to teach you how to spin and weave."

"The blue flowers that your husband chose are called flax," added the queen. "I love it very much."

Queen Hulda taught Hans and his wife how to spin and weave linen cloth from the fibers of the flax plants. Many people bought the linen and the flax seeds so that Hans and his wife became very rich.

Questions:

1. How does the story let us know the deer is special?
2. Why was the Queen pleased that Hans chose the flower?
3. What does the word **peal** mean in the sentence, “Suddenly a **peal** of thunder shook the grotto?”
4. Why does the wife change her mind about the flowers Hans chose?