Think About It!

Critical-Thinking Question: After reading “The Penny Tree,” think about the whole story to answer the question below.

1. The author uses the phrase “generous imagination” several times in the story. Who has a “generous imagination” at first? Later? What does this change show?

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**Pick Your Own Vocabulary Words**

**Directions:** We’ve given you the definitions of five important words from this issue’s story “The Penny Tree.” Look for the words as you read. Then pick out three more words that are new to you. Write their definitions, using context clues or a dictionary to help you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORD</th>
<th>PAGE NO.</th>
<th>IT MEANS . . .</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. demise</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>the death or end of something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. fertile</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>having the right conditions to make plants grow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. regulation (adjective)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>acceptable according to official rules</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. smarmy</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>polite or kind, but in a way that is not believable; fakely nice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. sneering</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>smiling or laughing in a way that shows you are looking down on someone or something</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MY OWN WORDS:**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Thoughts, Words & Actions**

**Directions:** In the story “The Penny Tree,” author Jack Gantos uses Jack’s thoughts, words, and actions to develop Jack’s character and bring him to life on the page. For each character trait listed on the left, give examples of Jack’s thoughts, words, and actions in the story that illustrate the trait.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character Trait</th>
<th>Thoughts</th>
<th>Words</th>
<th>Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jack thinks up creative ideas.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack would rather spend money than save it.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jack cares about his little brother, Pete.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Write Now!** Use the thoughts, words, and actions you identified in the chart to help you respond to the writing prompt on page 15: What happens next summer? Write a continuation of the story. Include dialogue between Jack and Pete, plus Jack’s thoughts and actions.
Jack’s Problem and Solution

Directions: The action of a story is called the plot. Most plots involve a problem. After some complications and important events, a solution is found. Fill in each block in the pyramid below to identify the problem and solution that make up the plot of “The Penny Tree.” Use the prompts to help you.

1. Setup
   Who do you meet at the beginning of the story? Where are they?

2. The Problem
   What is Jack’s main problem? How does the problem get more complicated as the story goes on?

3. Climax
   What happens that makes Jack realize the problem is bigger than he thought?

4. The Solution
   What does Jack do to solve the problem?

5. Conclusion
   What happens after Jack has solved the immediate problem?
# How Jack Changes

**Directions:** Answer the questions in the chart below, comparing Jack at the beginning of the story with Jack at the end. Use specific examples from the story.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>At first</th>
<th>By the end</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How does Jack feel about giving Pete a birthday gift?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. How clever does Jack think his idea for Pete’s gift is?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. How does Jack think Pete will react to watering the penny tree six times a day?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. What does Jack plan to do with his money?</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
“The Penny Tree” Quiz

Directions: Read the story “The Penny Tree” in the December 2018/January 2019 issue of Storyworks. Then fill in the bubble next to the best answer for each question below.

1. At the beginning of the story, you can guess that Betsy thinks Jack is ______.
   A kind  C stupid  
   B selfish  D smart

2. Which line from the story supports your answer to question 1?
   A “I felt like a genius.”
   B “This will make him happy.”
   C “Jack, you spend all your money on yourself.”
   D “Then he asked a question that I gave the wrong answer to.”

3. Why does Jack demand that Betsy give him one thousand pennies?
   A Betsy lost a $10 bet to Jack.
   B Betsy agreed to pay for some new baseball cards for Jack.
   C Betsy owes Jack money for Pete’s gifts that they bought together.
   D Jack wants to fill his piggy bank with pennies.

4. In the phrase “sooner or later, I’d have to announce the demise of the penny tree,”
   demise means ______.
   A lie  C death
   B truth  D growth

5. You can guess that Jack’s parents and sister think that the penny tree scheme . . .
   A is a great idea for a birthday gift.
   B could end up making Pete upset.
   C is very funny.
   D will make the family rich.

6. How does Jack try to stop Pete from expecting more money from the tree?
   A He tells Pete the truth about the penny tree.
   B He cuts the leaves off the tree to make it look like the tree has stopped growing.
   C He turns off Pete’s alarm clock to keep Pete from watering the tree.
   D He digs up the tree.

Constructed Response

Directions: On a separate piece of paper, write your answer to each question in a well-organized response. Make sure you support your answers with details from the story.

7. What is one example of a “generous imagination” being helpful to Jack? What is one example of it creating problems for him?

8. What do you think Jack learns by the end of the story?
9. Explain what Jack means when he says that “the more broke I became, the happier everyone else was.”

10. Describe Jack’s relationship with his little brother. Use examples from the story in your answer.
Jack Contest

My name: ____________________________________________________________
Teacher’s name: ______________________________________________________
School name: _________________________________________________________
School address: ________________________________________________________

(Remember to include city, state, and ZIP code!)

School phone: _________________________________________________________
Parent’s name and email (optional): _______________________________________

See page 15 of the December 2018/January 2019 issue of Storyworks for more information about this contest.

My Response

What happens next summer? Write a continuation of the story. Include dialogue between Jack and Pete, plus Jack’s thoughts and actions.

Entries will be judged on:

- a clearly stated main idea
- good organization and transitions
- effective use of supporting evidence
- grammar, spelling, and punctuation

Continue on another piece of paper if you need more room.

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