

You are old, Father William



In this extract from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Alice has just told the caterpillar that because her adventures have been so confusing she is finding it difficult to remember things. The caterpillar responds by asking her to recite a poem – and this is the one she chooses.

“You are old, Father William,” the young man said,
“And your hair has become very white;
And yet you incessantly stand on your head –
Do you think, at your age, it is right?”

- 5 “In my youth,” Father William replied to his son,
“I feared it might injure the brain;
But now that I’m perfectly sure I have none,
Why, I do it again and again.”

- 10 “You are old,” said the youth, “as I mentioned before,
And have grown most uncommonly fat;
Yet you turned a back-somersault in at the door –
Pray, what is the reason of that?”

- 15 “In my youth,” said the sage, as he shook his grey locks,
“I kept all my limbs very supple
By the use of this ointment – one shilling the box –
Allow me to sell you a couple.”

- 20 “You are old,” said the youth, “and your jaws are too weak
For anything tougher than suet;
Yet you finished the goose, with the bones and the beak –
Pray, how did you manage to do it?”

“In my youth,” said his father, “I took to the law,
And argued each case with my wife;
And the muscular strength which it gave to my jaw
Has lasted the rest of my life.”

- 25 “You are old,” said the youth; “one would hardly suppose
That your eye was as steady as ever;
Yet you balanced an eel on the end of your nose –
What made you so awfully clever?”

- 30 “I have answered three questions, and that is enough,”
Said his father; “don’t give yourself airs!
Do you think I can listen all day to such stuff?
Be off, or I’ll kick you down stairs!”



From *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*
Lewis Carroll (1832–98)

1 What relation is the young man to Father William?

1 mark

2 What visible sign of old age is referred to in the first verse?

1 mark

3 The word 'incessantly' means _____

1 mark

4 Describe the rhyming pattern of the poem.

1 mark

5 When Father William was young he rubbed ointment into his limbs, and this kept them supple.

a) The word 'supple' means _____

1 mark

b) As a result, what was Father William able to do in old age?

1 mark

6 a) What is 'suet'? Use a dictionary to check your answer.

1 mark

b) Why might suet be particularly suitable for an old man to eat?

1 mark

7 What parts of a goose did Father William eat that were unusual?

1 mark

8 a) Who is referred to as a 'sage'?

1 mark

b) What kind of person would be described as a sage?

1 mark

9 Which question went unanswered?

1 mark

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total out of 12

RJ manoeuvred the tractor back towards the barn, with Maria and some of the others running behind. None of his classmates had ever been to a farm before, so he had invited them out to help with the hay-making. That morning RJ's father had driven them down the long, pothole-marred road that RJ travelled each day by school bus. Now they stood around, looking to RJ like he was an **authority** on farming. It felt good.

The hayloft in the barn was filled with the greying remains of last year's hay. It was time to load in this year's crop. RJ picked up an old, fluffy yellow bale from the floor and showed the others how to fling it on the conveyor belt. It looked easy.

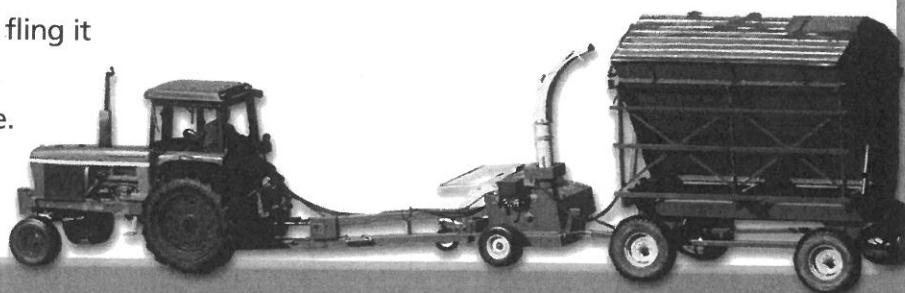
"Now you," RJ said to Maria with a sly smile. "You can try with one of these little green ones." The green bale of fresh-cut hay was

much smaller than the yellow bale he'd lifted, but Maria couldn't get it to budge. Suddenly she started to laugh.

"You won't trick me that way!" she shouted.

"Those green ones are still full of water!"

RJ grinned. He liked the way she had come all that way to help him, and he also liked that she could take a joke.



Farm Expert

Comprehension Questions

1B

1. How does RJ feel when his friends come to the farm?
 - a. embarrassed
 - b. proud
 - c. scornful
2. RJ asks Maria to lift the heavy bale of hay to
 - a. make the others laugh at her.
 - b. show her that he's stronger than she is.
 - c. show his friends that he knows something they don't.
3. What does **authority** mean in this story?
 - a. an expert
 - b. an author
 - c. a show off
4. Why can't Maria lift the green bale?
 - a. She's not as skilled at hay-making as RJ.
 - b. It's very heavy because the hay is still wet.
 - c. She couldn't concentrate because she was laughing.
5. Which sentence is most likely true?
 - a. RJ lives near his school.
 - b. RJ's friends often visit him at the farm.
 - c. RJ thinks Maria is a good friend.