Jenna and the Black Cat

“Eek! That’s bad luck!” Jenna said when Erica walked under the ladder that leaned up against the card-store wall. “Quick! We’ve got to find some salt to shake over your right shoulder.”

Erica was used to her friend’s superstitions. Jenna had many of the usual ones, like not stepping on cracks. She also had a slew of superstitious beliefs that were unique. She wouldn’t wear the same-color shirt two days in a row. She believed that you couldn’t experience each day as a new day if you wore yesterday’s color. Erica overlooked Jenna’s quirks, though she kidded her about them sometimes. What she liked about Jenna was that she was thoughtful and that she liked to help. She volunteered as a tutor after school and, on Saturdays, she worked at an animal shelter.

After getting the salt to toss over her shoulder, Jenna and Erica began the walk from the mall back to Jenna’s house. Their route took them through the park, where a soccer game was going on. That meant that they had to take a longer route, around the field and past the “ghost” tree. The ghost tree was just a maple tree whose limbs grew in a pattern that looked like arms reaching to the sky. When its leaves fell off, the ends of the branches pointed like sharpened fingers in all directions. It had been called the ghost tree as long as anyone in town could remember. On Halloween, some kids would put streamers in the tree to make it look especially spooky. Jenna usually stayed away from the tree. It gave her the creeps.

Jenna quickened her pace. That’s when they heard a small cry. “It’s coming from the tree,” Erica said. While Erica went to the base of the tree, Jenna held back. “It’s a kitten,” Erica called to her friend. “I can’t reach it.” Jenna stepped closer and saw the animal on a low branch. It seemed scared. “If you cup your hands, I can climb up and get it,” she said. Erica was surprised to see Jenna reach for the black cat.

---

1 superstition: a belief or practice resulting from ignorance, fear of the unknown, or trust in magic
2 slew: a large number
3 quirk: an odd personal habit; idiosyncrasy
1. According to the passage, Jenna does all of the following EXCEPT

A volunteer as a tutor  
B work at an animal shelter  
C toss salt over her shoulder  
D walk under ladders

2. The passage describes Jenna’s problem of finding a black kitten in a tree. How does Jenna solve the problem?

A She lets Erica climb up and get the cat.  
B She walks quickly past the tree and runs away.  
C She climbs up the tree and gets the cat.  
D She and Erica coax the kitten out of the tree.

3. After reading the passage, what can you conclude about Jenna?

A She is very superstitious but also thoughtful and kind.  
B She is so superstitious that she is impossible to be around.  
C She wants to become less superstitious and more like Erica.  
D She has many superstitious beliefs, but she isn’t afraid of black cats.

4. Read this sentence from the passage: “She also had a slew of superstitious beliefs that were unique.”

In this sentence, the word **unique** means

A exciting  
B unusual  
C creepy  
D funny

5. The primary purpose of the passage is to describe

A the importance of being a good friend and helping others  
B how a superstitious girl deals with finding a black cat  
C why people who are superstitious are afraid of so many things  
D how Erica and Jenna became friends and make a good team
6. What did Jenna make Erica toss over her shoulder after she walked under a ladder?

_____________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________

7. Why do you think that Jenna “held back” when she first saw the kitten?

_____________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

Jenna screamed, “That’s bad luck!” ___________ she saw Erica walk under a ladder.

A  and  
B  when  
C  unless  
D  until
9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

While Jenna and Erica were walking to Jenna’s house, they found a black kitten in a tree.

Who? Jenna and Erica

(were doing) What? _______________________________________________________________________

Where? __________________________________________________________________________


Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: ____________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________
Teacher Guide and Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 750

Featured Text Structure: Problem/Solution – the writer poses a problem and suggests possible solutions

Passage Summary: “Jenna and the Black Cat” describes a girl who is very superstitious and how she deals with the problem of finding a black kitten stuck in a tree.

1. According to the passage, Jenna does all of the following EXCEPT

   A volunteer as a tutor  
   B work at an animal shelter  
   C toss salt over her shoulder  
   D walk under ladders

2. The passage describes Jenna’s problem of finding a black kitten in a tree. How does Jenna solve the problem?

   A She lets Erica climb up and get the cat.  
   B She walks quickly past the tree and runs away.  
   C She climbs up the tree and gets the cat.  
   D She and Erica coax the kitten out of the tree.

3. After reading the passage, what can you conclude about Jenna?

   A She is very superstitious but also thoughtful and kind.  
   B She is so superstitious that she is impossible to be around.  
   C She wants to become less superstitious and more like Erica.  
   D She has many superstitious beliefs, but she isn’t afraid of black cats.

4. Read this sentence from the passage: “She also had a slew of superstitious beliefs that were unique.”

   In this sentence, the word unique means

   A exciting  
   B unusual  
   C creepy  
   D funny

5. The primary purpose of the passage is to describe

   A the importance of being a good friend and helping others  
   B how a superstitious girl deals with finding a black cat  
   C why people who are superstitious are afraid of so many things  
   D how Erica and Jenna became friends and make a good team
6. What did Jenna make Erica toss over her shoulder after she walked under a ladder?

Suggested answer: Jenna made Erica toss salt over her shoulder. [paragraphs 1 and 3]

7. Why do you think that Jenna “held back” when she first saw the kitten?

Suggested answer: Jenna is very superstitious and is afraid of black cats. [paragraph 4]

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

Jenna screamed, “That’s bad luck!” __________ she saw Erica walk under a ladder.

A and  
B when  
C unless  
D until

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

While Jenna and Erica were walking to Jenna’s house, they found a black kitten in a tree.

Who? Jenna and Erica  
( were doing ) What? were walking to Jenna’s house and found a black kitten  
Where? in a tree


Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: answers may vary.