

## The Wallet

Jenny stared at the store window longingly. There was nothing in this world that she wanted more than a Happy Hannah doll and all that currently separated her from the hottest doll of the holiday season was a thin piece of glass and \$29.95 plus tax. Unfortunately, Jenny didn't even have the 95 cents, so she let out a deep sigh and continued walking home.

As she stomped across the slushy sidewalk, she considered her options. She thought about taking over her brother's chores. If she shoveled the driveway, washed the dishes all month, dusted, and vacuumed... she fidgeted with her fingers as she added it up... she would have eleven dollars. Just as she was concluding that this would not be enough, something caught her eye. It was a small, pink triangle poking out from the snow on the roadside.

Jenny walked over to the triangle and removed it from the snow, whereupon she realized that it was not a triangle at all but a rectangle. More importantly she realized that the rectangle was a fashionable leather wallet. She unzipped the bulging wallet to find a thick wad of folded green bills. Jenny gasped and nearly dropped it. She gathered herself and went to close the snap on the wallet when she saw some plastic cards. One was a credit card and the other an ID.

Jenny stared at the old woman in her driver's license photo. The woman had a beautiful smile that reminded Jenny of her grandma. Jenny sighed and then she shoved the wallet into her purse. She turned around and walked in the direction from which she came.

Jenny's heart beat quickly as she entered the store. She had long dreamed about this moment, but something didn't feel right about it. As she approached a stack of Happy Hannah dolls, she pushed away her feelings. She grabbed one of the dolls off of the stack. She felt electricity surging through her body as she began walking toward the checkout.

As Jenny approached the register, the Happy Hannah Show theme song began playing. Jenny looked around startled, and then realized that it was her mobile phone. She checked the caller ID and saw that it was her grandma. In one hand she held the Happy Hannah doll and in the other she held the phone on which her grandma was calling. Jenny heart filled with love and appreciation as she thought of her sweet old grandma. She put the doll down and picked up the phone call.

"Hi, Grandma? I'm going to be a little bit late tonight. I've got to drop something off... Yeah, it was good... O.K... Alright... I love you too." Jenny left the store and walked through the slush all the way to the other side of town. She thought of her grandma as she rang the bell at 301 West Street. The woman who answered the door had been crying recently and looked distressed. Jenny recognized her from the ID. "Here, I found this in the snow," Jenny said as she handed her the wallet. The woman face glowed with joy and relief.

"Oh, good God! This is the money for the orphanage! Now we can bring the children the puppies for Christmas! It's a miracle!" The woman took the wallet smilingly. She was so appreciative that she gave Jenny a cookie and a ride home. Jenny had sort of hoped that she would reward her good deed with a Happy Hannah doll, but Jenny did get a chocolate chip cookie, and chocolate chip cookies were her favorite.

After doing her brother's chores for three months, Jenny finally got a Happy Hannah doll. She hated doing all of that extra work, but she knew that she had made the right choice when she was done because she could play with her Happy Hannah doll *and* look her grandma in the eyes.

## *The Wallet* - Reading Skill Sheet

1. Author's Purpose: **entertain**  
Why did the author write this?

**inform**

**persuade**

2. Genre: \_\_\_\_\_  
Ex: Nonfiction, fiction, or folklore

Subgenre: \_\_\_\_\_  
Ex: Autobiography, science fiction, fable, informational writing, etc.

3. Narrator's Point of View: \_\_\_\_\_  
1st-person, 2nd-person, 3rd-person objective, 3rd-person limited, or 3rd-person omniscient

4 & 5. Summarize the text:  
Five key events from beginning, middle, & end.

### 6. Exposition

A.

Setting: \_\_\_\_\_  
When and where does the story take place?

B. Conflict: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the conflict in the story.

7. **Rising Action:** List some events that occur before the climax.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Climax:  
The turning point

Falling Action: List some events that occur after the climax.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

Resolution:  
When the conflict is solved

## An Unexpected Chat

"Stick this in his hair," said Brian as he handed Jake a clump of Fun Dough. Jake held the colorful lump in his hand and considered his situation: he didn't want to make things harder for the new kid, but he was happy that Brian wasn't picking on him and it felt good to be a part of something. So Jake stuck the Fun Dough in the new kid's hair, whereupon the new kid saddened and asked Jake why he did it. Jake could not respond to this and Brian laughed as Jake was sent to the office.

Jake sat stiffly in front of Principal Griffin's desk while the large man chastised him. Mr. Griffin blustered, hawed, and threatened Jake with expulsion, but when everything was said and done all Jake received was an after school detention. Throughout the day Jake felt vaguely bad about what had happened with the new kid, but his mood improved when he saw Brian in detention.

Detention passed quickly for Jake as he and Brian exchanged inappropriate notes. Many of these notes contained mean messages about the teacher who was monitoring them. They compared him to a slew of farm animals and insulted his habits. Then Jake tried to talk with Brian about *Death Soldiers IV*, a new game that Jake had been playing. Brian discouraged Jake's interest by calling him a nerd. Then Brian ordered Jake to procure a carton of eggs from his home so that they could "egg that chicken new kid tomorrow." Jake knew that Brian would have him do the egging, but he nodded in assent anyway.

After the period of silent captivity ended, Brian raced home. He erased the various messages left by school personnel about the day's events from his mother's answering machine, and then he grabbed a carton of eggs from out of the fridge and wrapped it in a towel before sliding it into his backpack. He sat down on the couch to play the new *Death Soldiers IV* game before his mom came home.

While playing *Death Soldiers IV* online, Jake and his friend Morph joined a group of local players. The game hadn't started yet and the players were talking to each other in the lobby when Jake heard a familiar voice. "...*And I had to get a haircut to get this gunk out of my hair and now I look really stupid.*" Jake recognized the voice as that of the new kid at his school. The new kid went on, "*It's just really hard because I thought the kid who did it was a pretty cool kid. He had a DS IV shirt on and everything. I mean, it would just be nice to have one cool friend at this lame school.*"

Jake was moved by the new kid's words. He turned off the game and took a deep breath. He remembered all of the times that Brian had picked on him and made him feel bad. He thought about how Brian had gotten him in trouble today and would do the same thing tomorrow. Then he thought about how Brian didn't even like video games, and he realized that he didn't want to be like Brian. Jake took the carton of eggs out of his backpack and put them back into the fridge. Then he grabbed his limited edition *Death Soldiers IV* hat and put it in his bag.

Jake got to school early that day and waited by the bike rack. A bus parked and a line of students exited. Brian was in the back of the line. He walked over and leaned on the bike rack next to Jake. Smirking, he asked him, "Did you bring it?" Jake nodded. Brian snickered and walked over by Emily and began whispering. Brian's face was full of restlessness and mischief.

Finally the new kid showed up on his bike. He had a new haircut and he sneered at Jake. Jake looked at him with sincerity. "I'm sorry about yesterday." The new kid huffed. "Yeah, ok." Brian watched the interaction with great interest. Jake continued, "No, really, it must be hard being new. I don't know what came over me yesterday. I want you to have this as a peace offering..." Jake pulled the *Death Soldiers IV* hat from his bag and handed it to the new kid. The kid's face brightened immediately. Jake looked over and saw Brian's crinkled face. Emily giggled. The new kid looked at Jake and replied excitedly, "This is the limited edition version! Can I have it for keepsies?" Jake nodded. As the new kid rattled on to Jake about hidden weapons and secret locations in *Death Soldiers IV*, Jake knew that he had made the right choice.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Pierce the Spaceman

Pierce tightened the buckle on his moon belt. He had never seen the fogs of Planet Zarzoo so thick and the high gravity was weighing down his space boots. Pierce's mission was simple: he was to dive through the sludge pits of Zarzoo and gather Zennon crystals to power the space colony's defense shields. It seemed simple enough to Pierce, but he had not anticipated a high gravity day and the acid rain was burning through his spacesuit.

As Pierce walked over the toxic sand dunes of the planet Zarzoo, he saw the two golden suns setting. It would now get much colder. Pierce turned on the thermal warming power in his spacesuit as he approached the sludge pits. He checked his oxygen tanks and the levels were green. Pierce thought to himself: *It's time to dive through some sludge*, and then he dove into the radioactive green goo of the sludge pits.

Pierce felt that diving to the bottom of the sludge pits was easier than usual. *Perhaps it's because of the high gravity*, he reflected as he kicked his way toward the shiny Zennon crystals spread along the floor of the pits. He gathered the space crystals and stuffed them into his space pouch, he felt the slithering tentacle of a Toxopus as it disconnected his air supply from respirator. Toxic fluid poured into the air containers, making them useless. "Beast!" Pierce shouted, taking in the last clean breath from the ruptured air tank.

He vaporized the monster with one blast of his raygun as he began frantically scrambling for the surface. Clawing and pulling, Pierce fought for air, but the high gravity and the thick sludge made escape seem impossible. As Pierce's reality faded out, angels carried him.

Pierce sat in a white chair on a white cloud, surrounded by white lights. A voice from all around spoke softly but strongly to him: "Pierce, it is not your time." Pierce felt peace. "You must bring the Zennon crystals to the space colony." the voice went on, "If you do not, the defense shields will fall and all will perish." Pierce recognized the importance of his mission but he did not know how to escape the sludge pits without oxygen, yet alone the high gravity of planet Zarzoo. "Pierce, the Zennon crystals have power," were the last words Pierce heard before he returned to his oxygen deprived body.

Pierce was fading in and out of consciousness when he noticed tiny air bubbles seeping out of one of the Zennon crystals. Apparently, he had grazed one of the crystals with his raygun when he was vaporizing the Toxopus. Pierce put the cracked Zennon crystal to his mouth and drew a breath of oxygen from it. His head stopped throbbing. He took another breath from the crystal and his heart beat slowed. Pierce breathed a sigh of relief as he climbed out of the sludge pit.

Marching through the thick fogs of Zarzoo, Pierce held on to the Zennon crystals. He knew that they would power the defense shields for the space colony and prevent an alien attack. When Pierce got back to his spaceship, he thankfully powered up the oxygen generator and set the navigation system for his home planet. Then he turned the key to his spaceship, but it wouldn't start. The engine kept barking, but it wouldn't turn over. Pierce smacked the spaceship on its dashboard and it started. Pierce breathed another sigh of relief. Throwing the Zennon crystals in the back seat, Pierce flew the ship from the high gravity of planet Zarzoo. He loosened a notch on his space belt and waited for the space boosters to hit full power. Everything would be okay.

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## The Phone Call

Paul looked out the window and sighed. The driveway was still empty and it was getting dark. He checked the clock and sighed again, deeper this time. His dad had said that he would pick him up by 5:30, but it was almost seven and Paul hadn't heard a word from him. He walked up the stairs to his room and put away his baseball glove. Paul figured that even if his Dad did miraculously show, it wouldn't be much fun playing catch in the dark. Paul sat down on the couch and tried to do some of his reading homework, but he couldn't get his dad off of his mind.

The phone rang at about 8:00 and Paul let it go to the machine. It was his Dad: *"Hey Paul, I'm so sorry that I couldn't make it tonight. I had to finish up a big project at work. Maybe we can catch a baseball game this weekend. Oh wait, this weekend's no good. How about next weekend? That should work. You and I are going to the stadium for sure, Paulie. I hope all is well..."*

Paul listened to the machine in disgust. He knew that his dad had a job and a life, but he couldn't understand why he was always flaking out on him. Paul thought to himself: *Couldn't someone else get one of these bad news speeches once in a while? Why does it always have to be me?* Paul crashed on the couch with his book opened to the first page and fell asleep.

The next day at school, Paul didn't turn in his math or science homework and he failed a pop quiz in reading class. Paul's homeroom teacher, Mr. Matthews, noticed Paul's uncharacteristically poor performance and asked him to stay after class. Paul sort of murmured a response that sounded like "Ok." When the bell rang, the other children filed out of class. Paul huffed and waited with his head on his desk. Mr. Matthews pulled up a chair next to him.

"What's up, Paul? You're not doing your homework, you're not studying for tests, and this isn't like you. Something must be bothering you. What is it?" Paul didn't want to tell him. He knew that if he started talking a flood of emotions would pour out of him. He just wanted to be alone with his pain, so he sat there quietly, not even looking at Mr. Matthews. "Well Paul, if you don't want to talk, I will. I know that something's bothering you and you've got to get it out. You don't need to tell me, but you need to tell someone or this thing is going to eat you up. Paul, you've got to feel your best to do your best. The sooner you get this thing off of your chest, the sooner you can heal."

As Paul walked home from school, he reflected on the things the Mr. Matthews had told him. He knew that he hadn't been himself recently. Maybe he stopped doing his work because he was looking for attention from his father. He hadn't really thought about it too much up until now, but as he walked home that night he realized that he wasn't just letting his dad spoil his plans: he was letting him spoil his life. Paul figured that Mr. Matthews was right. He couldn't do his best until he felt his best. He decided to take his advice and talk to someone about it.

That night when Paul got home from school, he called his Dad. The call went to voicemail after ringing seven or eight times. Paul had heard his Dad's answering machine message more times than he cared to remember, but this time things were different. When it ended, he would say what he really felt. When the phone beeped, Paul began talking: *"Dad, it's Paul. I can't go to the stadium with you next weekend. I've got a lot of homework to catch up on. Also, I don't really want to spend another day looking out the window and waiting. When you break plans with me, Dad, it hurts me, and I'm sick of getting hurt. It's not too late to rebuild our relationship, but we're going to have to start small. Maybe you can help me with my homework sometime or something. Dad, I love you, but that's how I feel."*

As Paul ended the call, he felt as though a tremendous burden had been lifted off of his shoulders. He didn't know whether his dad would change. He didn't even think that he would, but it didn't matter. Paul had changed. He had expressed his feelings to the right person, rather than just bottling them up inside of himself and he had a clear head as he worked through his assignments that night.

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