Kiko's Christmas List

Reading comprehension | Vocabulary in context | Ages 10–12



Kiko's Christmas list was usually a cheerful collection of wishes. This year, however, she had written only one thing: a new lantern for Mr Tanaka, the elderly caretaker whose shop had been damaged in a storm. She folded the paper into an inconspicuous square and slipped it into her coat pocket, hoping nobody would notice her secret plan.

At the winter market, Kiko scrutinised a row of lanterns. She turned each one over, examined its seams and held it towards the light, searching for a crack. The cheapest lantern looked beautiful, but its glass hung precariously from a bent wire. One small knock, she realised, might send it crashing to the ground.

The stallholder offered her a discount, but Kiko was reluctant to accept. She kept her money tucked inside her glove and shook her head. Instead, she meandered through the market, wandering between stalls without choosing a particular route. Snow gathered on her scarf as the evening grew darker.

At last, she found a craftswoman who worked with meticulous care. Every joint was neatly fastened, every pane polished, and not a single brushstroke strayed beyond the painted stars. Kiko counted her coins twice. There were still not enough.

Seeing her disappointed face, the craftswoman asked whom the lantern was for. When Kiko explained, the woman looked bewildered: her eyebrows rose and she asked Kiko to repeat the story. Then she smiled. 'Mr Tanaka repaired my roof last winter,' she said. 'Take it as my gift to him.'

Kiko thanked her and hurried into the snowy street. With the clouds thickening and the wind growing stronger, another snowfall seemed inevitable. But beneath her coat, the carefully wrapped lantern was safe. For once, Kiko had received the best Christmas present without putting it on her list.

Vocabulary in Context

Circle ONE answer (A–D) for each question. Use clues from the story.

1. What does inconspicuous suggest about Kiko's folded list?

A. It was decorated to attract attention.

B. It was small and unlikely to be noticed.

C. It was impossible to understand.

D. It had been accidentally damaged.

2. What does scrutinised tell us about how Kiko examined the lanterns?

A. She looked at them quickly.

B. She compared their prices only.

C. She studied them very carefully.

D. She refused to touch them.

3. What does precariously mean in the description of the glass?

A. Unsteadily and at risk of falling.

B. Securely and firmly attached.

C. Brightly and attractively coloured.

D. Completely hidden from view.

4. Why is reluctant the best word for Kiko's reaction to the discount?

A. She was delighted to receive it.

B. She did not understand the offer.

C. She was too impatient to listen.

D. She was unwilling to accept it.

5. What does meandered suggest about Kiko's movement?

A. She marched in a straight line.

B. She wandered without a fixed route.

C. She ran as fast as she could.

D. She travelled with a guide.

6. What does meticulous suggest about the craftswoman?

A. She was careless with details.

B. She worked unusually quickly.

C. She paid close attention to every detail.

D. She made only expensive lanterns.

7. What does bewildered tell us about the craftswoman's reaction?

A. She was puzzled and surprised.

B. She was furious with Kiko.

C. She was completely uninterested.

D. She was proud of her own work.

8. What does inevitable suggest about the approaching snowfall?

A. It was already over.

B. It could easily be prevented.

C. It was unlikely to happen.

D. It seemed certain to happen.

Answer Sheet

Kiko’s Christmas List | Vocabulary in context

B

B. It was small and unlikely to be noticed.

Clue: She hid the folded list because she wanted her plan to remain secret.

C

C. She studied them very carefully.

Clue: She turned them over, checked seams and searched for cracks.

A

A. Unsteadily and at risk of falling.

Clue: The glass hung from a bent wire and could fall after a small knock.

D

D. She was unwilling to accept it.

Clue: She kept her money tucked away and shook her head.

B

B. She wandered without a fixed route.

Clue: The text says she wandered between stalls without choosing a route.

C

C. She paid close attention to every detail.

Clue: The neat joints, polished panes and precise paintwork show great care.

A

A. She was puzzled and surprised.

Clue: She raised her eyebrows and asked Kiko to repeat her explanation.

D

D. It seemed certain to happen.

Clue: The clouds were thickening and the wind was growing stronger.