

A House Is Not a Home

Think about it

Question 1. What does the author notice one Sunday afternoon? What is his mother's reaction? What does she do?

Answer: One Sunday afternoon, the author smelled something strange, and then he noticed smoke pouring in through the seams of the ceiling. The smoke began to fill the room quickly. The author and his mother ran out of the house.

The author ran to the neighbours to call the fire department, while his mother ran back into the house. She then ran out of the house carrying a small metal box full of important documents. She dropped the case on the lawn and ran back into the house to bring the pictures of the author's dead father, which was the only thing that she had to remember him by.

Question 2. Why does he break down in tears after the fire?

Answer: After five hours, when the fire was finally out, the author realized that his cat was nowhere to be found. He broke into tears when he got reminded of the new school he had to join, the fire in his house and his cat, who might have died in the fire. He had suffered big losses.

Question 3. Why is the author deeply embarrassed the next day in school? Which words show his fear and insecurity?

Answer: The next day in school, the author is embarrassed because the clothes he was wearing looked weird, he had no books or homework, and his backpack was gone. He felt insecure and frustrated.

The words that show his fear and insecurity are: "I didn't want to grow up, change or have to handle life if it was going to be this way. I just wanted to curl up and die."

Question 4. The cat and the author are very fond of each other. How has this been shown in the story? Where was the cat after the fire? Who brings it back and how?

Answer: The bond between the cat and the author is shown in multiple instances in the story. For example, the author says, "She was never far from me. I had rescued her when she was a kitten, and somehow she knew that I was the one responsible for giving her 'the good life'."

When the author realises that his cat is missing, he says, "Then all at once it hit me— the new school, the fire, my cat— I broke down in tears and cried and cried. I was suffering loss, big time."

The cat had been so freaked by the fire that she ran over a mile away. Her collar had our phone number on it, but the author's phone had been destroyed and disconnected. A stranger woman took her in and worked hard to find out whose cat it was. She brought the cat back to the author.

Question 5. What actions of the schoolmates change the author's understanding of life and people, and comfort him emotionally? How does his loneliness vanish and how does he start participating in life?

Answer: The author's schoolmates showed genuine concern towards him. On the second day of his new school, people insisted that he hurry up and go to the gym. The author reached the gym. There was a big table set up with all kinds of stuff on it, just for me. They had taken up a collection and bought me school supplies, notebooks, and all kinds of different clothes—jeans, tops, sweatsuits. People who had never spoken to him before came up to him to introduce themselves. He got all kinds of invitations to their houses. This incident changed the author's understanding of life and people.

That was the day when he made friends at school. That's how his loneliness vanished, and he started participating in life.

Question 6. What is the meaning of “My cat was back, and so was I”? Had the author gone anywhere? Why does he say that he is also back?

Answer: The author had not gone anywhere. He says the given statement because he was finally able to get things sorted in his life.

He had faced big losses. He missed his friends and teachers from the old school, his home was burnt to ashes, and his cat was missing.

Gradually, he made new friends in the new school and saw his house getting rebuilt. When a stranger woman gave him his cat back, he says, “My cat was back, and so was I”. He means that now his life was complete again- friends, house and his cat- he now had all that he had lost.

