

Lesson #43

Hang Spring-Cleaning!

Mole had been working very hard all morning, spring-cleaning his little home. First he used brooms, then dusters, ladders, steps, and chairs. With brushes and pails of whitewash, he cleaned until he had dust in his throat and splashes of whitewash all over his black fur. He had an aching back and weary arms. Spring was moving in above and penetrating his dark and lowly little house. It was small wonder, then, that he suddenly flung down his brush on the floor.

"Hang spring-cleaning!" he said and bolted out of the house without even a coat. Something up above was calling him to exit by way of the steep little tunnel that led out to sun and air. He scraped and scratched, working busily with his little paws and muttering to himself, "Up we go," until at last, his snout came out into the sunlight, and he found himself rolling in the warm grass of a great meadow.

"This is fine," Mole said to himself, "better than whitewashing!" The sunshine struck hot on his fur. Soft breezes caressed his brow, and after the seclusion of the cellarage he'd lived in so long, the carol of happy birds fell on his dulled hearing almost like a shout. He jumped on all four legs at once, in the joy of living and the delight of spring without its cleaning. He pursued his way across the meadow till he reached the hedge on the far side.

"Hold up," said an elderly rabbit at the gap, "sixpence for the privilege of passing by the private road!" But the rabbit was bowled over in an instant.

"Onion sauce!" remarked Mole, impatient and contemptuous. He trotted alongside the hedge, chaffing the other rabbits as they peeped out of their holes. And he was gone before the rabbits could think of a thoroughly satisfactory reply. Then they all started grumbling at each other.

"How STUPID you are!"

"Well, why didn't YOU say something?"

"You might have reminded him," and so on, in the usual way. But, of course, it was then much too late.

To Mole, it all seemed too good to be true. Hither and thither through the meadows he rambled, along the hedgerows. He found birds building, flowers budding, leaves thrusting, and everything happy. Instead of having an uneasy conscience pricking him and whispering *whitewash*, he somehow could only feel how jolly it was to be the only idle dog among all these busy citizens. After all, the best part of a holiday is perhaps not so much to rest, as to see all the others busily working.



- RL.5.1 1. What is Mole's attitude on the day described in this passage?
- A) grumpy and frustrated
 - B) excited and cheerful
 - C) impatient and contemptuous
 - D) all of these
- RL.5.2 2. Based on what you've read so far, which of these is a theme in this story?
- A) Rabbits are like evil trolls who demand payment for traveling on their roads.
 - B) Mole is a playful character who is eager for adventure.
 - C) Because Mole is impatient and stupid, he will probably come to no good.
 - D) Mole is a hard worker who spends his entire life underground.
- RL.5.4 3. The passage says, "Something up above was calling him to exit by way of the steep little tunnel that led out to sun and air." Who or what was calling Mole?
- A) an elderly rabbit
 - B) birds and other animals in the meadow
 - C) a yearning to be outdoors in springtime
 - D) all of these
- RL.5.1 4. On the far side of the meadow, an elderly rabbit says, "Hold up." Why?
- A) The rabbit hopes to go with Mole on a journey through the meadows.
 - B) The rabbit wants Mole to pay for the right to walk along the road.
 - C) The rabbit wants Mole to join him and others in a game of bowling.
 - D) The rabbit is waiting to hear the secret password, "Onion sauce."
- RL.5.3 5. In what way is Mole similar to the elderly rabbit?
- A) Both characters are cheery, playful, and energetic.
 - B) The rabbit is demanding, and Mole's response is scornful.
 - C) The rabbit is building an underground burrow near Mole's home.
 - D) Both characters are jumping around on all four legs at once.
- L.5.5 6. In the passage, find and underline the sentence that contains the phrase "the seclusion of the cellarage." Explain what the phrase means.
-
-