

Experiments



“Eew, gross, Joey,” said Kayla.

Joey, once again, had taken his entire lunch plate and mixed all the food together. It was his favorite thing to do at camp. Today they had spaghetti and meatballs, green beans, cornbread, and chocolate cake for dessert. Joey had started by mashing the cornbread and chocolate cake together. Then he stirred the green beans into the spaghetti. Finally, he took the mashed-up chocolate corn-cake combination and sprinkled it on top of the spaghetti and meatballs and green beans. Joey now had one dish: chocolate corn-cake-flavored spaghetti and green-bean meatballs.

Joey did something like this pretty much every day. “It’s an experiment,” he told the table. “Like what we do in class. It’s fun.” Joey was into experiments,

which usually consisted of taking one or more things, and combining them somehow—mixing together dirt and sand, stirring glue into a glass of water, combining the different kinds of paint in the art room (which usually resulted in brown), and mixing all his food together. This wasn't even the grossest experiment Joey did at lunch. The worst was when he took the mashed-up food and dunked it in his milk. Sometimes the milk would turn different colors. Sometimes the mashed-up food would float, sometimes it would sink and sometimes it would dissolve. Sometimes part of it would dissolve and part wouldn't, like the time he shoved a mashed-up blueberry cake into his glass of milk. The cake part had gotten soggy and dissolved, but the blueberries had stayed together and just floated around in the milk. The only way Joey knew this is because he'd tried a sip and gotten a couple blueberries. He couldn't actually see them in the milk because it had turned a brownish-blue. Joey would usually take a sip as part of the experiment, and would try to get the other kids at the table to try it too. Joey sometimes offered a dollar to anyone who could drink three sips, but nobody ever could. Joey's experiments almost always tasted absolutely horrible.

Joey offered a bite of the chocolate corn-cake flavored spaghetti and green-bean meatballs to the other kids at his table. Jeanette took him up on it. She was the only one who sometimes liked Joey's experiments. But even she couldn't eat more than a bite. Which meant the table would lose their “wasted food challenge”—again.

As part of camp lunch, all the tables weighed their leftovers at the end of the meal. One by one the tables would line up, scrape their plates into a garbage can, and then the garbage can would be weighed. The garbage can itself weighed three pounds exactly, so that was deducted from the total. Whichever table had the least amount of wasted food got to be first in line the next day at lunch. Whoever had the most amount of wasted food had to stay and help with the dishes. Each table had the same amount of campers, to be fair. The tables were each named after a different kind of tree that was found at the camp. Joey's table was the Scrub Pine table. Scrub Pine table had lost so many times that everyone called them the Scrub all-the-time table.

Everyone blamed Joey. He was always the one with all the leftover food. But Joey insisted it wasn't his fault. He had a trick. Before each weighing, he always mashed up his concoction into the smallest ball possible. Almost everyone else's plate was strewn with uneaten food. Joey just had a ball in the corner of the plate.

Scrub Pine table had already done dishes four days in a row, and it looked like it was about to be five. So DeSean decided to conduct an experiment of his own. "Hey, I'm going to ask the kitchen staff if we can weigh each plate separately this time," he said. "Then we'll know whose fault this is." This was fine with Joey. He was sure he wasn't the problem. "And whoever leaves the most food has to clean the sinks at the end." This was the worst job, the one all the kids tried to get

out of. After the dishes, the sinks were always lined with a wet, grimy mess of food scum.

One by one they weighed their plates. DeSean's weighed $\frac{1}{4}$ pound. So did Jeanette's. Kayla's didn't weigh anything. Everyone else's plate weighed $\frac{1}{2}$ pound or less. Except Joey's. Joey's weighed one and $\frac{3}{4}$ pounds.

The whole table looked at Joey. "But how?" he said. "I made the ball so small!"

"It doesn't work like that" said DeSean. "It doesn't matter how small you make the ball. You're just shifting it around. It's still the same amount of food, and weighs the same."

Joey hated cleaning the sink scum. So he tried one more thing. "But, c'mon. You guys never help me eat my experiments" he said. "I help you with your plates." This was true. Joey was usually so hungry after he had ruined his own lunch that the others at the table took pity on him and let him have some of theirs. "So we should all do the sinks."

Nobody was impressed by this argument. Everyone rolled their eyes at Joey. "You're doing the sinks," said Kayla. "And we're all tired of doing dishes. From now on, no more experiments that are too gross to eat."

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What does Joey do with the food on his lunch plate?

- A He mixes it all together.
- B He eats it very quickly.
- C He throws it at the people sitting around him.
- D He eats the chocolate cake but not the green beans.

2. In this story, staying after lunch to help with the dishes is an effect. What is the cause?

- A sharing food with other people at lunch
- B mixing food together to create new tastes
- C eating at the lunch table with the largest amount of wasted food
- D coming up with the idea of stirring glue into glasses of water for fun

3. Mashing his food up into the smallest ball possible does not make Joey's plate weigh less.

What evidence from the passage supports this statement?

- A Joey tells other people from his table that they should help him clean the sinks because he helps eat their food.
- B Joey combines the food on his lunch plate into a single dish: chocolate corn-cake-flavored spaghetti and green-bean meatballs.
- C Joey's experiments almost always taste horrible, but there is one person at his table who sometimes likes them.
- D Joey's plate weighs one and $\frac{3}{4}$ pounds, while the plates of everyone else at his table weigh $\frac{1}{2}$ pound or less.

4. What could be a reason that Joey's table keeps losing the wasted food challenge?

- A Joey likes to mix together dirt and sand, stir glue into glasses of water, and combine all his food at lunch.
- B The weight of Joey's uneaten food makes the total weight of his table's plates higher than the total weight of plates at other tables.
- C The worst part about doing the dishes is having to clean the wet, grimy mess of food scum out of the sinks at the end.
- D DeSean decides to conduct an experiment to figure out whose fault it is that the Scrub Pine table keeps losing the wasted food challenge at lunch.

5. What is this story mainly about?

- A Joey's food experiments and DeSean's weight experiment
- B how to make chocolate corn-cake-flavored spaghetti and green-bean meatballs
- C what happens when Joey puts blueberry cake into a glass of milk
- D the reasons that Kayla thinks Joey's food experiments are gross

6. Read the following sentences: "So DeSean decided to conduct an **experiment** of his own. 'Hey, I'm going to ask the kitchen staff if we can weigh each plate separately this time,' he said. 'Then we'll know whose fault this is.'"

What does the word **experiment** mean?

- A a problem that occurs when no one is expecting it
- B one or more actions taken in order to find something out
- C a type of behavior that is harmful to the person doing it
- D an agreement made between two or more people to solve a problem

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

Most campers do not want to try Joey's food experiments _____ they are too gross to eat.

- A although
- B because
- C before
- D especially

8. According to the passage, what do Joey's experiments usually consist of? Give one example.

9. What experiment does DeSean decide to conduct?

10. How are Joey's experiments and DeSean's experiment alike?

Teacher Guide & Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 800

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8. According to the passage, what do Joey's experiments usually consist of? Give one example.

Suggested answer: Joey's experiments usually consist of taking one or more things and combining them. Students may cite any example in the passage, from mixing together dirt and sand to mashing up lunch food.

9. What experiment does DeSean decide to conduct?

Suggested answer: At minimum, students should respond that DeSean decides to conduct an experiment to figure out how much the plate of each person at his table weighs. (If students respond that DeSean conducts an experiment to determine whose fault it is that his table keeps losing the wasted food challenge, prompt them to explain how the guilty party will be found.) Students may also provide details about how the plates are weighed separately and the outcome the experiment.

10. How are Joey's experiments and DeSean's experiment alike?

Suggested answer: At minimum, students should be able to recognize that the experiments of both Joey and DeSean are efforts to try something new. Students may point out other parallels, such as the lunch table location and the subject of the experiments (lunch food).