

Siblings

By ReadWorks



Mikey was eating breakfast on a Saturday morning when her mom came into the kitchen to ask where her older brother was.

“I don’t know,” she said. “He’s probably playing video games.” She slurped another mouthful of cereal off her spoon and heard her mom calling to Henry to get out of the basement for once. She turned the page of the book she was reading.

Henry had turned 16 a few weeks before, and since then, he had spent most of his weekends in the basement—there was an old TV set up with his video game console, a mini-fridge filled with sodas, and a beat-up, old futon their dad had in college. The washing machine and dryer were also located down there, and Mikey knew her mom hated it when Henry wouldn’t leave the basement long enough for her to do the laundry in peace.

Their mom walked back into the kitchen and sat down across the table from Mikey.

“I just don’t understand that boy anymore,” she said. “Does he talk to you?”

“He stopped talking to me in the third grade, when he started coming home late on school days,” Mikey said. She shrugged and put her book down.

They used to be best friends, Mikey and Henry. They took their golden retriever Scout on long walks through the undeveloped forest area behind their house every day after school. They would pretend to be in Middle Earth, like the characters from the *Lord of the Rings* series

(which Henry used to read obsessively). Mikey was basically interested in anything Henry was and happy to be Gollum or an orc or whatever evil creature Henry felt like vanquishing that day. (Scout was always on Mikey's side, because she had a disadvantage, being younger than Henry and the evil character.) When it got dark, they would make their way back through the trees to the wide lawn in the backyard of their house, and then in through the sliding glass doors to the kitchen for a snack. Henry liked to eat peanut butter sandwiches and would make three: two for him and one for Mikey. Their mom would come home a little while later, and they would pretend to be starving for dinner.

But at some point in the last year, everything changed. Henry started making plans with his friends after school, and the house would be empty—except for Scout—when Mikey was dropped off from carpool after school. Sometimes Henry didn't come home until after Mikey and her parents were already sitting down to eat dinner. It soon became Mikey's job to take Scout on a walk by herself, but it was becoming winter, and the sun was setting early, and Mikey was nervous to go into the undeveloped woods by herself.

"Really, Mom, the person it bothers the *most* is Scout. She absolutely hates having to walk on the streets in the neighborhood. Dogs were made for running around trees, not for walking on asphalt." Mikey shrugged again.

Her mom smiled at her sadly and reached across the table to take Mikey's cheek in her hand, but Mikey brushed it off quickly. She always did that when she felt sorry for Mikey.

"I'm sorry, sweetie," she said. "Do you want me and Dad to talk to Henry about Scout's predicament?"

Mikey shook her head emphatically. "He would just resent Scout," she said.

Her mom nodded. "Maybe. I'm sure he'll grow out of this phase soon."

Mikey picked her book up again. "I doubt it," she said.

Her mom stood up and left the kitchen. Sunlight was streaming in through the big windows that surrounded the room, and Scout was lying in a patch of warmth under Mikey's chair. She supposed this was how it would always be: her and Scout, hanging out and growing old together as if Henry had never existed.

Suddenly, the whirring sound of the washing machine rose up from the basement. Henry walked into the kitchen and sat down where their mom was sitting before.

"Hey, Mikey," he said. "Want to take Scout on a walk?"

Mikey put her book down and smiled. "Sure," she said.

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

1. According to Mikey, where has Henry spent most of his weekends since he turned 16?
 - A) in the woods
 - B) with his sister
 - C) in his room
 - D) in the basement

2. What main problem does Mikey face?
 - A) Her brother Henry does not spend much time with her anymore.
 - B) Her brother Henry no longer makes her sandwiches after school.
 - C) Her dog Scout does not want to go on walks on the streets in the neighborhood.
 - D) She always has to pretend to be the bad guy when she plays with her brother.

3. Mikey looks up to her older brother Henry and likes being with him. What evidence from the passage best supports this conclusion?
 - A) "They took their golden retriever Scout on long walks through the undeveloped forest area behind their house every day after school."
 - B) "Scout was always on Mikey's side, because she had a disadvantage, being younger than Henry and the evil one."
 - C) "Mikey was basically interested in anything Henry was and happy to be Gollum or an orc or whatever evil creature Henry felt like vanquishing that day."
 - D) "They would pretend to be in Middle Earth, like the characters from the *Lord of the Rings* series (which Henry used to read obsessively)."

4. Why does Mikey tell her mom that Scout is most bothered by Henry not spending time with them?
 - A) because Mikey thinks this will get Henry to spend time with her again
 - B) because Mikey does not want to tell her mom how much she misses Henry
 - C) because Mikey is worried about Scout's emotional well-being
 - D) because Mikey wants her mom to tell Henry to take Scout on walks again

5. What is this story mostly about?

- A) a brother and sister who stay close friends as they grow up
- B) a girl who likes taking walks in the woods with her dog
- C) a boy grows up and develops new interests
- D) a girl who misses spending time with her brother

6. Read the following sentences:

“Really, Mom, the person it bothers the *most* is Scout. She absolutely hates having to walk on the streets in the neighborhood. Dogs were made for running around trees, not for walking on asphalt.” Mikey shrugged again.

“I’m sorry, sweetie,” she said. “Do you want me and Dad to talk to Henry about Scout’s **predicament**?”

As used in this sentence, what does the word “**predicament**” mean?

- A) a difficult or unpleasant situation
- B) an argument with someone
- C) a question that is easy to answer
- D) a pleasant and enjoyable situation

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

_____, Mikey and Henry spent a lot of time together, but now Henry spends most of his weekends alone in the basement.

- A) Specifically
- B) Previously
- C) Although
- D) Finally

8. Why does Mikey have to take Scout on walks by herself now?

9. How has Mikey and Henry's relationship changed since Henry turned 16?

10. How has the change in Mikey and Henry's relationship affected Mikey? Identify and explain an example from the passage that shows how Mikey feels about her relationship with Henry.
