

Sherry's Game

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Sherry Anne Lipski was born and raised in New York City. Her neighborhood was packed with people. Rows of houses lined the streets, some of which held three families in one. There were some trees planted in the concrete sidewalk, so there was a slight presence of nature. But cars ran up the block constantly, and parking spots were always filled. There was a constant hum: people talking, music playing, trucks delivering food, fire engines shouting at cars to get out of the way. All of this went on all day, every day.

Sherry loved it.

New York was exciting! It was her home. It was all she'd ever known. And there was always something to do, even for a 10-year-old. Most of her closest friends lived just a few blocks away. She could call or text any or all of them and, in minutes, they could gather together at the ice cream shop, pizza place, arcade, or one of the local playgrounds. When Sherry's friends got a message from her to meet at the playground, they knew what she wanted to do: play handball.

American handball is a popular game, most often played in cities, especially New York. It is kind of like tennis except there is no net and the opponents are actually positioned right next to each other. It's common for players to play in singles games. A singles game is when two players compete against each other. To begin a game, one of the players "serves" by smacking a rubber ball (the only piece of equipment needed to play the game) with the palm of a hand at a wall, or perhaps the side of a building. After the ball deflects off the wall, the other player must hit it back against the wall for the first player to have a whack at it. And back-and-forth the game goes, until someone hits the ball "out of bounds" or is unable to continue the volley. Players can decide on where the boundaries lie, or, if they're lucky, the playground's construction crew might have painted lines on the asphalt to mark "out of bounds" for them already.

Sherry could play handball for hours and hours, from the time school got out until the sun went down. With that much practice, she became the best player in her entire neighborhood, winning just about every time she walked onto a court. Her friends would challenge her, accepting the fact they would definitely lose, but played anyway just to get some exercise and have some fun.

Toward the end of her fourth-grade school year, her parents told Sherry some very upsetting news.

"Sherry," her mother began, worried that her daughter might cry. "Your father has been given a wonderful new job by the company he works for."

"Yes, Sherry," her father added. "I'm very excited about it. It's a promotion, which means we can all have a much more comfortable life together."

"OK..." For a moment, Sherry was unsure why they were speaking to her in such a way when it all sounded like such good news up until that point. Then it became clear.

"Unfortunately," her mother said. "We have to move to Pennsylvania. Your father's company has a small office out there that he has been asked to manage."

"We know that you'll miss your New York home, Sherry," said her dad. "But you're a wonderful young lady. We know you will make some new friends."

Sherry began to cry right away. Her parents comforted her, but she was very sad for weeks as she said goodbye to all of her childhood friends and the neighborhood they played in together.

A few months later, Sherry was still in a funk. She missed New York. Her new town was okay, the other kids at school were welcoming to her, and her new fifth-grade teacher, Ms. Fox, was very good at her job. Still, it did not feel like her *home*.

"What do you like to do for fun?" her schoolmate Tara asked one day at lunch.

"I don't know," said Sherry quietly.

"You don't know? What do you mean? Everybody likes to have fun!" Tara said with a bright smile.

Of course, Sherry knew exactly what she liked to do for fun, but also figured that none of her peers would have any idea how to play handball.

"Come on," Tara said. "I like to go shopping and watch tennis. You must like *something!*"

"You watch tennis?" Sherry asked her.

"Yup! I play every once in a while, too."

"Really?" Sherry was getting excited. She thought that maybe, just maybe, if she showed Tara how to play handball, Sherry could finally find the motivation to go outside again. Remembering that all she needed was a rubber ball and a wall, she told Tara to meet her in the back of the school when it was out. There, she would show her what she liked to do for fun.

After school, Sherry told Tara all the rules. "That's easy to play!" Tara said. "It's just like tennis!" Sherry agreed.

They played for two consecutive hours until the pair had to go home. Sherry's pupil was not very good at handball right away, but she figured with Tara's ability to play tennis, she would be able to compete a little bit better at the city game soon.

"I'll beat you someday!" Tara shouted at Sherry as she walked away, in a friendly tone.

"We'll see," Sherry replied, realizing what all of this meant.

Sherry made a new best friend. And she was lucky, too. Sherry remembered how she presumed that nobody in her new town would be interested in playing handball. How silly that was: the first person she mentioned it to played the game with her for hours the first chance she got!

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

1. How does Sherry feel about New York City?

- A) She feels annoyed because it is too noisy.
- B) She feels sad because no one will play with her.
- C) She loves it because it is her home.
- D) She hates it because she doesn't like cities.

2. How does Sherry change in the story?

- A) She learns to play handball like a champion.
- B) She learns she was wrong to make assumptions about her new classmates.
- C) She learns that the schools in Pennsylvania have better teachers.
- D) She learns that her friends in New York will never forget her.

3. Handball is an important part of Sherry's life in New York City. What evidence from the text supports this conclusion?

- A) Handball is a popular game most often played in cities.
- B) Sherry practices for hours and becomes the best player in the neighborhood.
- C) Handball players can decide where the boundaries lie.
- D) Sherry's friends would challenge Sherry to a game of handball.

4. Why does Sherry cry when her parents tell her they must leave New York?

- A) She has to leave behind all the great malls and shopping centers where she goes with friends.
- B) She knew she would miss the trees, nature, and quiet in her neighborhood.
- C) She has to say goodbye to all of her childhood friends and the neighborhood they played in together.
- D) She has to give up her chance at the big handball-playing championship.

5. What is this story mainly about?

- A) how Sherry's love for New York City convinces her to move back
- B) how Sherry's love for sports helps her to succeed in math
- C) how Sherry's game gets in the way of her schoolwork
- D) how Sherry's game helps her to connect with old and new friends

6. Read the sentences: "Sherry began to cry right away. Her parents comforted her, but she was very sad for weeks as she said goodbye to all of her childhood friends and the neighborhood they played in together. A few months later, Sherry was still **in a funk**. She missed New York. Her new town was okay, the other kids at school were welcoming to her, and her new fifth-grade teacher, Ms. Fox, was very good at her job. Still, it did not feel like her home."

As used in the passage, what does the phrase "**in a funk**" mean?

- A) in a style of music
- B) in a strange room
- C) in a smelly place
- D) in an unhappy mood

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

Sherry knew exactly what she liked to do for fun. _____, she figured that none of her peers would have any idea how to play handball.

- A) Therefore
- B) Frequently
- C) As a result
- D) However

8. Which character helps Sherry to see that she was "silly" to presume that nobody in her new town would be interested in playing handball?

9. Does Sherry's "pupil" enjoy her first handball lesson? Why or why not? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

10. Explain how Sherry's feelings and views change by the end of the passage. Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
