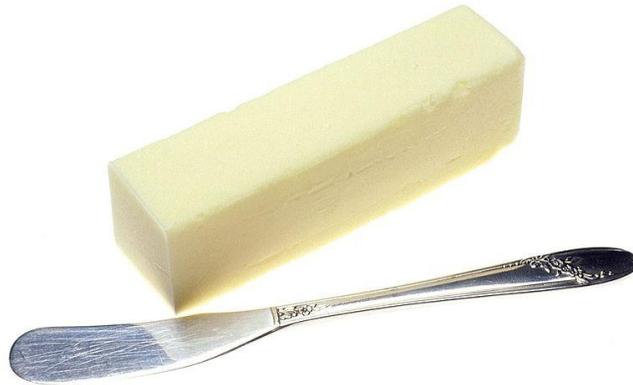


The Boy With The Buttery Hands

W.M. Akers



It was on a rainy afternoon in mid July when Johnny learned not to cover his hands in butter. He was stuck in a summer funk: too bored to try to find any way to relieve his boredom, too sleepy to get off the couch. He finally found the energy to haul himself to his feet and clomp down the hallway to the kitchen. He wasn't hungry, but he figured he might as well look at some food.

The hallway that ran down the middle of their house was long, with a wood floor that was perfect for toy cars or sliding in sock-footed feet. But on a rainy summer day, Johnny didn't even have it in him to slide down the hall.

There was nothing he wanted to eat in the pantry and nothing in the fridge. He was about to give up and return to the sofa when he spied the butter—sitting out in a butter

dish beside the breadbox. Softened by the summer humidity, it glistened under the stove light. Now that, Johnny thought, is something a boy could have fun with.

He flopped onto the floor, peeled off his socks, and began applying the butter. He slathered it onto his feet with hands, rubbing it in like a car collector polishing a prized classic. Once his feet were thoroughly slippery, he stood up and walked slowly to the hallway taking care to put his feet straight down, lest he slip and fall on his face. He stared down the long hallway, spit on his hands, rubbed them together, and grabbed hold of the doorframe. He leaned back and then yanked himself forward, hoping to launch himself down the hall like an Olympic ski-jumper.

Instead, he fell on his face.

“Ow!” he said, and tried to stand up. He failed, slipping and falling again. By bracing himself in the middle of the doorjamb, he was able to push himself to his feet. Walking carefully again, he returned to the kitchen—bruised, thirsty and covered in butter.

There was something slightly odd about the way that Johnny drank water. Ever since he was little, he preferred not to drink out of glasses. Instead he drank cold things out of mugs, because it made it hard for his mom to notice if he was drinking soda when he wasn't allowed. Like everything else Johnny did, this drove his sister May crazy.

“Why are you drinking juice out of that mug?” she would say. “It’s going to get all sticky. Use a glass, like a normal person!”

She got particularly upset when she caught him drinking out of her favorite mug, a purple one, covered in glitter, which said “Best Friends Forever.” May’s best friend at camp had made it for her the previous summer, and she used it only on special occasions. Johnny thought this was stupid since he didn’t know of any camp friends who stayed close for a whole year, much less forever. Still, he respected May’s attachment to the mug, and only used it when he wanted to make her angry.

But today, Johnny wasn’t thinking. If he had been, he probably wouldn’t be covered in butter. He slipped and slid his way into the kitchen, desperate for some water, and reached for the first mug he saw. It slipped through his fingers and shattered on the floor.

Maybe May and her camp buddy would be best friends forever, but their mug was finished.

“Oh no,” said Johnny. For nearly a full minute, he stared at the mug as if he could put it back together with his eyes. It didn’t work. He flopped his way around the kitchen to the utility drawer and rummaged through it until he found the super glue. Like every

tube of super glue in every drawer in the country, it had dried out, gotten crusty, and glued itself to the cabinet.

“Oh no!” he said.

He kept rummaging and finally found a jar of rubber cement. He scanned the fine print on the back of the label until he found the words “non-toxic.” It would have to do.

Johnny let himself fall to the ground, then scooped his way over to the shattered mug. Starting with the base, he searched for shards that would match the jagged angles around the handle. When he found one, he unscrewed the rubber cement, which is no easy task with hands covered in butter. It was just like putting together a jigsaw puzzle.

Johnny hated jigsaw puzzles.

He worked piece by piece, getting rubber cement all over his face, hair and hands, until he had finally assembled something that looked vaguely like a mug. Clutching it in both hands, he raised it back to the shelf and then walked as slowly as possible back to the living room and the sofa.

He had liked it better when he was bored.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What does Johnny put on his hands and feet?

- A socks
- B tape
- C butter
- D chocolate

2. What motivates Johnny's decision to put butter on his feet?

- A He is bored.
- B He is hungry.
- C He is angry.
- D He is lonely.

3. Johnny thinks that putting butter on his feet will let him slide quickly down the hallway. What evidence from the passage best supports this conclusion?

- A "He stood up and walked slowly to the hallway taking care to put his feet straight down, lest he slip and fall on his face."
- B "He leaned back and then yanked himself forward, hoping to launch himself down the hall like an Olympic ski-jumper."
- C "He stared down the long hallway, spit on his hands, rubbed them together, and grabbed hold of the doorframe."
- D "He was about to give up and return to the sofa when he spied the butter—sitting out in a butter dish beside the breadbox."

4. How does Johnny most likely feel about putting butter on his feet by the end of the story?

- A He enjoys it.
- B He is nervous about it.
- C He is confused about it.
- D He regrets it.

5. What is this story mostly about?

- A Johnny puts butter on his feet with bad results.
- B Johnny puts butter on his feet and slides down the hallway.
- C Johnny breaks his sister May's mug because he is mad at her.
- D Johnny tries to fix May's mug with superglue and rubber cement.

6. Read the following sentences: "He flopped onto the floor, peeled off his socks, and began applying the butter. He **slathered** it onto his feet with hands, rubbing it in like a car collector polishing a prized classic. Once his feet were thoroughly slippery, he stood up and walked slowly to the hallway."

As used in this sentence, what does the word "**slathered**" mean?

- A removed something
- B spread something thickly
- C cleaned something up
- D dried something off

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

Johnny is bored on a rainy summer day, _____ he covers his feet in butter.

- A yet
- B like
- C after
- D so

8. What is "slightly odd" about the way Johnny drinks water?

9. Explain why the way that Johnny drinks water is important to the plot of the story.

10. The passage ends with the following sentence: "He had liked it better when he was bored." Explain why Johnny feels this way by using evidence from the passage.

Teacher Guide & Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 920

1. What does Johnny put on his hands and feet?

- A socks
- B tape
- C **butter**
- D chocolate

2. What motivates Johnny's decision to put butter on his feet?

- A **He is bored.**
- B He is hungry.
- C He is angry.
- D He is lonely.

3. Johnny thinks that putting butter on his feet will let him slide quickly down the hallway. What evidence from the passage best supports this conclusion?

- A "He stood up and walked slowly to the hallway taking care to put his feet straight down, lest he slip and fall on his face."
- B **"He leaned back and then yanked himself forward, hoping to launch himself down the hall like an Olympic ski-jumper."**
- C "He stared down the long hallway, spit on his hands, rubbed them together, and grabbed hold of the doorframe."
- D "He was about to give up and return to the sofa when he spied the butter—sitting out in a butter dish beside the breadbox."

4. How does Johnny most likely feel about putting butter on his feet by the end of the story?

- A He enjoys it.
- B He is nervous about it.
- C He is confused about it.
- D **He regrets it.**

5. What is this story mostly about?

- A **Johnny puts butter on his feet with bad results.**
- B Johnny puts butter on his feet and slides down the hallway.
- C Johnny breaks his sister May's mug because he is mad at her.
- D Johnny tries to fix May's mug with superglue and rubber cement.

6. Read the following sentences: "He flopped onto the floor, peeled off his socks, and began applying the butter. He **slathered** it onto his feet with hands, rubbing it in like a car collector polishing a prized classic. Once his feet were thoroughly slippery, he stood up and walked slowly to the hallway."

As used in this sentence, what does the word "slathered" mean?

- A removed something
- B spread something thickly**
- C cleaned something up
- D dried something off

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

Johnny is bored on a rainy summer day, _____ he covers his feet in butter.

- A yet
- B like**
- C after
- D so

8. What is "slightly odd" about the way Johnny drinks water?

Suggested answer: Johnny drinks water out of mugs instead of glasses.

9. Explain why the way that Johnny drinks water is important to the plot of the story.

Suggested answer: The way that Johnny drinks water is relevant to the plot of the story because if he did not drink out of mugs, he would not have broken his sister's favorite mug.

10. The passage ends with the following sentence: "He had liked it better when he was bored." Explain why Johnny feels this way by using evidence from the passage.

Suggested answer: Answers may vary and should be supported by the passage. Students should indicate that Johnny does not have a good time after putting butter on his hands, because he falls on his face and breaks his sister's mug. Since Johnny hates jigsaw puzzles, trying to put the mug back together is a chore. He does not encounter these problems when he is bored. So, being bored may seem like a better option to him by the end of the story.