

Cold Feet

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When someone says they have “cold feet,” it means they are afraid to do something they’re supposed to do. That wasn’t Louis’ problem. Louis actually had cold feet. They felt like icicles. Icicles on top of ice cubes. Inside of ice water.

It was *very* cold in his bedroom.

“I wonder if this is what Antarctica is like,” Louis said. “I’m glad I’m not a penguin.”

Louis lay in his cowboy pajamas, curled into as tight a ball as he could. He was supposed to go to sleep, but to go to sleep meant he had to stretch out his legs. And even though he was supposed to do that, he was afraid. So maybe he had both kinds of cold feet, after all.

That afternoon, it had snowed for the first time all year. Louis and his friends spent the whole day outside. They built snowmen. They sledged down the hill behind the school. They had snowball fights with Louis’ neighbor. All day long, they had so much fun that Louis didn’t notice how cold his feet were.

After a while, in fact, he didn't notice his feet at all. They were totally numb!

When he got home, Louis kicked the snow off his boots, unzipped them, and yanked them off his feet. He peeled off his socks, and was shocked by what he saw. His feet were as white as the snow outside! He poked his left foot. He poked his right foot. He didn't feel them at all.

"Uh...Mom!" he said.

Louis' mom told him to run a hot bath. He stuck his feet in the steaming water and gradually, feeling returned. The feeling that returned was hot.

"Too hot!" said Louis, and yanked his feet out of the tub. He dried them as well as he could, but he must not have done such a good job. By the time he climbed into bed, his feet were still a little damp. It was cold in his room—very cold—and cold air, plus wet feet, can only mean one thing.

His feet had frozen again.

"Brrrr!" said Louis. "Brrrrrrrrrr!"

He thought if he "brrrr-ed" loud enough, his mother would hear him. If she knew how cold his feet were, she would bring warm socks. She would bring extra blankets. She would bring hot water bottles. Louis trembled at the thought of how wonderful a hot water bottle would be.

He "brrrr-ed" as loud as he could, but Mom didn't hear.

Louis looked across his room at the closet. There were no hot water bottles in there, but there were socks. There were blankets. If he could get to his closet, he could save himself. But he couldn't get out of bed. He wasn't sure his feet were any good to walk on anymore. And the hardwood floor, shiny in the moonlight, looked as cold as the inside of a freezer. It was too cold to sleep, and too cold to walk across the floor.

"This is a pickle," said Louis. "Brrrr," he added, just to himself.

A shiver hit him. A bad one, that went down his spine like lightning across the night sky. He straightened his legs all the way, sending his feet right down to the coldest part of the bed, and then curled back up into his ball.

"Yikes!"

It was cold down there. Cold like the deepest, darkest part of a cave. Cold like the bottom of the ocean. Cold like outer space. And he was going to have to stick his feet down there. There was no question of getting up and getting a blanket. Socks were not coming to help. Louis was not getting out from under his blanket, and that meant he'd have to warm the bottom of the bed up himself.

He kicked his legs out. He kicked them around, running in place. He tried to rub the cold sheets as much as possible to make them warm. This, he had learned in science class, is called friction. Friction makes heat, and he needed as much heat as he could get.

He ran in place until his legs were tired, and then he stopped. He paused. Would his feet freeze again?

It was cold down there. Not as cold as it was before—not *very* cold—but still chilly. He felt the warmth fade. About to panic, he looked around for something to help. Beside the bed, just within arm's reach, were the clothes he had been wearing that afternoon. He grabbed his pants, shirt, long underwear and big winter coat. He piled them on top of his feet. They locked in the heat, and he knew his feet would eventually get cozy under there.

Now, Louis could sleep. He was feeling warmer already.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What is wrong with Louis?

- A He is scared.
- B His hands are cold.
- C He misses his mom.
- D His feet are cold.

2. How does Louis first try to solve the problem of cold feet?

- A He says, "Brrrr!" and hopes Mom will hear.
- B He puts his feet in a hot bath.
- C He rubbed the cold sheets with his feet.
- D He piles clothes on top of his feet.

3. Putting his feet in a hot bath helps Louis warm up his feet. Which details from the story support this conclusion?

- A "Louis' mom told him to run a hot bath."
- B "By the time he climbed into bed, his feet were still a little damp."
- C "He stuck his feet in the steaming water and gradually, feeling returned."
- D "He poked his left foot. He poked his right foot. He didn't feel them at all."

4. How could Louis have prevented cold feet in bed?

- A He could have dried his feet better.
- B He could have worn snow boots outside.
- C He could have stretched out his legs.
- D He could have curled up in a ball.

5. What is this story mostly about?

- A how Louis gets cold feet from playing outside
- B why saying "Brrrrr!" doesn't solve anything
- C how Louis solves the problem of cold feet
- D why taking a bath is the best way to warm up

6. Read the following sentences: "It was cold down there. Not as cold as it was before—not very cold—but still chilly. He felt the warmth **fade**. About to panic, he looked around for something to help. Beside the bed, just within arm's reach, were the clothes he had been wearing that afternoon. He grabbed his pants, shirt, long underwear and big winter coat."

What does "**fade**" mean as used in this sentence?

- A become noticeable
- B become stronger
- C quickly come back
- D slowly go away

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

Louis played outside in the snow all day. _____, his feet are numb and frozen.

- A As a result
- B On the other hand
- C Before
- D Particularly

8. What does Louis think will happen when he says, "Brrrrr!" loudly?

9. Explain why Louis does not get out of bed to get socks and blankets from his closet.

10. Explain how Louis finally solves the problem of his cold feet, and whether this was the best solution.

Teacher Guide & Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 550

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8. What does Louis think will happen when he says, "Brrrr!" loudly?

Suggested answer: Louis thinks that his mom will hear and will bring him warm socks, extra blankets, and hot water bottles.

9. Explain why Louis does not get out of bed to get socks and blankets from his closet.

Suggested answer: Louis does not get out of bed to get socks and blankets from the closet because he thinks the hardwood floor looks cold and he is not sure his feet are good to walk on anymore.

10. Explain how Louis finally solves the problem of his cold feet, and whether this was the best solution.

Suggested answer: Louis finally solves the problem of his cold feet by running in place to warm the bottom of his bed, then piling clothes from beside his bed on top of his feet to trap the heat.

Students may argue that it was or was not the best solution using information from the passage (it was not the best solution because he stayed in bed and was cold for a while instead of getting up to get warm socks; it was the best solution because he did not have to get out of bed).