

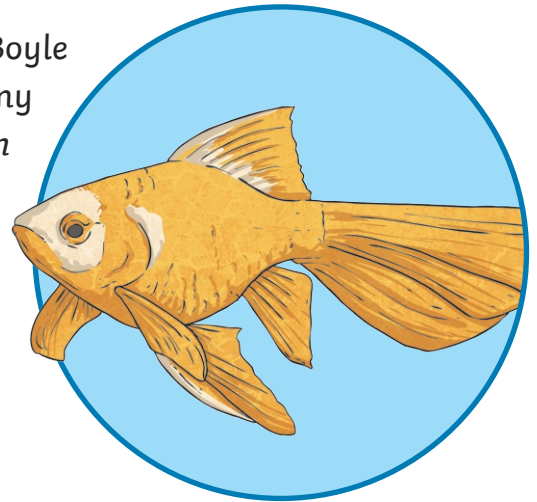


My Pet Polar Bear

It all started when Mum went to buy ice cream. “You’ll be alright,” she screeched over her shoulder as she dragged my little sister to the kiosk by the front gates of the zoo. “You’re ten now,” she continued...like I didn’t already know. “You’ll be going to high school on the bus on your own soon enough. I’m sure you can wait here on your own for one minute.”

And that’s exactly how long that they took before they came back with raspberry sauce dripping all over their shoes. Your average ten-year-old *would* have been fine on their own for just one minute. They’d have stood and watched as the magnificent bears swam through the freezing water of the giant glass tank. They’d have marvelled as two of them began a battle to the death over one measly fish head, and cooed as the little cubs sunbathed on the rocks. Your average ten-year-old wouldn’t have unzipped their backpack, shoved in an unsuspecting polar bear cub, along with a small fish for the journey home, and zipped it back up just in time for Mum to arrive back with a large cone.

Then again, I’m not your average ten-year-old. I’m Gordon Boyle and I’ve wanted a pet for as long as I can remember. No...my goldfish Spike doesn’t count... and she only let me keep *him* because I’d won him at the school’s summer funfair and she was too embarrassed to return him to the stall. I wanted a fully-fledged, interactive, responsive, living, breathing pet. Something I could play with, take to the park, feed my sprouts to under the table on Christmas Day... you know, one of those kinds of pets. Goldfish don’t even eat sprouts.



Q1: What two things did Gordon smuggle into his backpack at the zoo?

- _____
- _____

Q2: Find and copy **one** adjective that tells you that the bear cub did not know what was about to happen.



Q3: Why do you think Gordon was unhappy with a goldfish as a pet?

Use evidence from the text to support your answer.



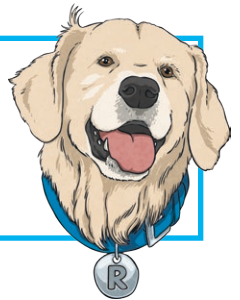
So here we are. I'm now sitting in my bedroom at 20 Whalley Road with a fully-fledged, interactive, responsive, living, breathing polar bear. Not a conventional pet, I'll admit it, but a pet nevertheless.

When you think about it, there isn't really room for a polar bear in your bedroom. Heck, there wasn't really enough room for my vast collection of football cards and yoyos, but when you've smuggled a polar bear home from the local zoo without your parents' consent, you can't exactly give it free reign of the house.

I started off with him in my wardrobe. That lasted about twelve minutes until he started howling – apparently polar bears don't really like the dark. How inconsiderate. Mum nipped in to see what all the fuss was about. I've never made up a lie so quickly in my life – not even when

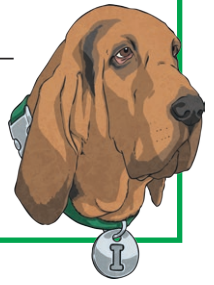
Mrs Riaz caught me trying to finish off a chocolate bar underneath the table in her science lesson. Thinking fast, I told her that I had a school project to prepare about wolves and I was 'trying to get into character'. She made me do a demonstration. I don't think I'll ever live that one down.

Q4: What is the name of Gordon's science teacher?



Q5: Why do you think that this text is written from Gordon's perspective?

Q6: Why was the polar bear's howling 'inconsiderate'?



Q7: *'Not a conventional pet, I'll admit it...'*

In this sentence, what does 'conventional' mean?



Q8: What is the first sign that Gordon is beginning to have doubts about his choice of pet?



After that escapade, I put him under my bed. He seems to like it there. Every now and again, he pokes his nose out of the edge and has a sniff around. He must like the fresh air – I do suppose it's a little stuffy down there between my old exercise books and my stinky football boots. Maybe I should take him outside. I'm not particularly sure how I'll walk him though. You do walk polar bears, right? I mean... can you even get a lead big enough?

This is all Mum's fault. I've been asking for a dog for years. I only really want a dog. If she'd said yes in the first place, I wouldn't be sat here at 4.30pm on a Sunday wondering about a polar bear's exercise regime and how exactly I'll manage to smuggle fish guts into my bedroom without Mum coming in with a can of air freshener. Would fish fingers do instead?

Come to think about it, when Frank grows bigger (oh, by the way, I've decided to name him Frank... as in Frank Lampard), he probably won't fit under my bed anyway. Where will I put him then? In the bath? In the attic? And if I can't smuggle a pack of fish fingers upstairs now, how will I feed him when he's bigger than me and Mum combined?

Oh, it's no use. If I come clean and admit it now, I might not get in quite as much trouble as when he chews the leg off my desk as a midnight snack. It's bound to happen. Maybe, when we drop Frank back off at the zoo, I can cry and wail so loudly that Mum will do the only thing possible to calm me down... she'll have to take me straight to Pet Palace and buy me the adorable puppy they've had in the window. Perhaps this could work in my favour after all...

Q9: *'I put him under my bed. He seems to like it there.'*

Why might Gordon think that the polar bear is happier underneath his bed?

Q10: *'Oh, it's no use.'*

What does this sentence imply about how Gordon is feeling?

Explain your answer.



Q11: Do you think that Gordon will keep Frank? Explain your answer.



Q12: Summarise the key points of the story in 20 words or less.





My Pet Polar Bear Answers

Q1: What two things did Gordon smuggle into his backpack at the zoo?

Accept the following two answers only:

- (an unsuspecting) bear cub
- a (small) fish

Q2: Find and copy **one** adjective that tells you that the bear cub did not know what was about to happen.

Accept the answer 'unsuspecting' only.

Q3: Why do you think Gordon was unhappy with a goldfish as a pet?

Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Accept answers which state the Gordon was unhappy with his goldfish because it did not do all of the things he wanted a pet to do, providing that the answer is supported by evidence from the text, such as:

- Gordon was unhappy with a goldfish because he said he wanted a pet he could 'take to the park' and you cannot take a goldfish to the park.
- Gordon wanted an 'interactive' and 'responsive' pet and goldfish do not really answer or play with you.
- Gordon wanted a pet that would eat his sprouts on Christmas Day and he said that 'Goldfish don't eat sprouts.'

Q4: What is the name of Gordon's science teacher?

Accept the answer 'Mrs Riaz' only.

Q5: Why do you think that this text is written from Gordon's perspective?

Accept answers which pertain to Gordon's thoughts, the events happening to Gordon and him having sole knowledge of what had happened, such as:

- It is written from Gordon's point of view because only Gordon knows about the polar bear in his bedroom.
- It is from Gordon's perspective because this text is all about Gordon's thoughts and only Gordon would be able to write about those.

Q6: Why was the polar bear's howling 'inconsiderate'?

Accept reasonable answers which discuss that the polar bear's howling ruined Gordon's plan to keep him in the wardrobe, such as:

- **The howling was inconsiderate because Gordon would now have to find somewhere new to hide the polar bear.**
- **Gordon thought it was inconsiderate because it was loud and would attract his mum's attention – something he did not want.**

Q7: *'Not a conventional pet, I'll admit it...'*

In this sentence, what does 'conventional' mean?

Accept definitions which relate to normal, usual, regular, standard, ordinary, typical or common.

Q8: What is the first sign that Gordon is beginning to have doubts about his choice of pet?

Accept any answer which explains Gordon beginning to have doubts, from within this section of the text, provided that relevant evidence is given from the text in support, such as:

- **Gordon starts to have doubts in the second paragraph of this section when he starts to say it was his mum's fault and he 'only really wants a dog'.**
- **Gordon starts to have doubts when he says 'if I can't smuggle a pack of fish fingers upstairs now, how will I feed him when he's bigger than me and Mum combined?' It shows he is thinking about the fact he won't be able to look after the bear.**

Q9: *'I put him under my bed. He seems to like it there.'*

Why might Gordon think that the polar bear is happier underneath his bed?

Accept answers which relate to the polar bear's howling earlier in the text and its absence, such as:

- **Gordon might think the polar bear likes it now because he is not howling like he was when he was in the wardrobe.**

Q10: 'Oh, it's no use.'

What does this sentence imply about how Gordon is feeling?

Explain your answer.

Accept reasonably explained answers which relate to Gordon giving up and feeling downhearted, despondent or defeated, such as:

- **It implies that Gordon is going to give up trying to keep the polar bear because he has realised it is too hard.**
- **I think it implies that Gordon is feeling defeated because it is too difficult to keep the polar bear in his bedroom like he had planned.**

Q11: Do you think that Gordon will keep Frank? Explain your answer.

Accept answers which relate to Gordon not keeping Frank, provided that an explanation is given, such as:

- **No because Gordon is thinking about coming clean and admitting it to his mum.**
- **No because Gordon is planning to make his mum get him a dog after they've dropped Frank off at the zoo.**
- **He won't keep him because he is too hard work and Gordon is hinting about telling his mum in the final paragraph.**

Q12: Summarise the key points of the story in 20 words or less.

Accept any reasonable summary of the story, which include Gordon smuggling a polar bear cub home from the zoo and struggling to look after it, in twenty words or less, such as:

'Gordon snuck a polar bear cub home from the zoo but could not look after it in his bedroom.'