

# **D**irections

Read this story.

*Tom is spending the summer on his aunt and uncle's farm. He misses his friend Petie, so he writes letters to Petie describing events on the farm.*

## **Excerpt from *The Midnight Fox***

*by Betsy Byars*

- 1 I had just finished writing this letter and was waiting for a minute to see if I would think of anything to add when I looked up and saw the black fox.
- 2 I did not believe it for a minute. It was like my eyes were playing a trick or something, because I was just sort of staring across this field, thinking about my letter, and then in the distance, where the grass was very green, I saw a fox leaping over the crest of the field. The grass moved and the fox sprang toward the movement, and then, seeing that it was just the wind that had caused the grass to move, she ran straight for the grove of trees where I was sitting.
- 3 It was so great that I wanted it to start over again, like you can turn movie film back and see yourself repeat some fine thing you have done, and I wanted to see the fox leaping over the grass again. In all my life I have never been so excited.
- 4 I did not move at all, but I could hear the paper in my hand shaking, and my heart seemed to have moved up in my body and got stuck in my throat.
- 5 The fox came straight toward the grove of trees. She wasn't afraid, and I knew she had not seen me against the tree. I stayed absolutely still even though I felt like jumping up and screaming, "Aunt Millie! Uncle Fred! Come see this. It's a fox, a fox!"
- 6 Her steps as she crossed the field were lighter and quicker than a cat's. As she came closer I could see that her black fur was tipped with white. It was as if it were midnight and the moon were shining on her fur, frosting it. The wind parted her fur as it changed directions. Suddenly she stopped. She was ten feet away now, and with the changing of the wind she had got my scent. She looked right at me.
- 7 I did not move for a moment and neither did she. Her head was cocked to one side, her tail curled up, her front left foot raised. In all my life I never saw anything like that fox standing there with her pale golden eyes on me and this great black fur being blown by the wind.
- 8 Suddenly her nose quivered. It was such a slight movement I almost didn't see it, and then her mouth opened and I could see the pink tip of her tongue. She turned. She still was not afraid, but with a bound that was lighter than the wind—it was as if she was being blown away over the field—she was gone.

- 9        Still I didn't move. I couldn't. I couldn't believe that I had really seen the fox.
- 10       I had seen foxes before in zoos, but I was always in such a great hurry to get on to the good stuff that I was saying stupid things like, "I want to see the go-rilllllllas," and not once had I ever really looked at a fox. Still, I could never remember seeing a black fox, not even in a zoo.
- 11       Also, there was a great deal of difference between seeing an animal in the zoo in front of painted fake rocks and trees and seeing one natural and free in the woods. It was like seeing a kite on the floor and then, later, seeing one up in the sky where it was supposed to be, pulling at the wind.
- 12       I started to pick up my pencil and write as quickly as I could, "P.S. Today I saw a black fox." But I didn't. This was the most exciting thing that had happened to me, and "P.S. Today I saw a black fox" made it nothing. "So what else is happening?" Petie Burkis would probably write back. I folded my letter, put it in an envelope, and sat there.
- 13       I thought about this old newspaper that my dad had had in his desk drawer for years. It was orange and the headline was just one word, very big, the letters about twelve inches high. WAR! And I mean it was awesome to see that word like that, because you knew it was a word that was going to change your whole life, the whole world even. And every time I would see that newspaper, even though I wasn't even born when it was printed, I couldn't say anything for a minute or two.
- 14       Well, this was the way I felt right then about the black fox. I thought about a newspaper with just one word for a headline, very big, very black letters, twelve inches high. FOX! And even that did not show how awesome it had really been to me.

**15** How are paragraphs 2 through 6 important to the structure of the story?

- A They describe the setting and the main characters.
- B They describe an event that is later repeated.
- C They explain why the fox is in the field.
- D They introduce a problem into the plot.

**16** Read this phrase from paragraph 4.

. . . my heart seemed to have moved up in my body and got stuck in my throat.

What does this phrase suggest about Tom?

- A He is having trouble standing still.
- B He is having difficulty speaking.
- C He is experiencing a thrill.
- D He is feeling affection.

**17** How are the events described in paragraphs 6 and 7 different from earlier events?

- A The fox is moving through an open area.
- B The fox is acting with less certainty.
- C The fox is moving at a faster pace.
- D The fox is aware of Tom.

**18** How is Tom's experience in the field different from his experience in zoos?

- A He is able to observe a black fox in the wild.
- B He is able to observe the way a black fox moves at the zoo.
- C He spends time observing a black fox at the zoo.
- D He is frightened to see a black fox in the wild.

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In paragraph 12, why does Tom hesitate over his letter?

- A He does not want other people finding out about the fox.
- B He is not sure his friend will believe him about the fox.
- C He is not sure how to capture his experience in words.
- D He does not have time to explain what he witnessed.

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Based on paragraphs 13 and 14, how are the words “WAR!” and “FOX!” similar?

- A They inspire a powerful response in Tom.
- B They provide Tom with a physical reminder.
- C They help promote Tom’s interest in writing.
- D They create connections within Tom’s family.

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Which statement **best** summarizes how the fox affects Tom?

- A Tom regrets not being able to share his experience.
- B Tom feels as though he is in a movie.
- C Tom is deeply moved by the event.
- D Tom can no longer concentrate.

# **D**irections

Read this story.

*It is the first day of school for Pearl, her friend JBIII (or JBThree), and her older sister, Lexie.*

## **Excerpt from *Ten Good and Bad* *Things About My Life (So Far)***

*by Ann M. Martin*

- 1 We stepped outside and I looked across Twelfth Street, and there was JBIII coming out of his building with his mother who wanted to take a first-day-of-school picture. JBIII posed for one half of one second, and then joined Dad and me for the walk to Emily Dickinson Elementary.
- 2 “Remember the first day of school last year?” I said to my father. “You walked Justine and me to Emily Dickinson. This year you’re walking JBThree and me.”
- 3 “Things certainly do change,” replied Dad, and I thought he looked a little sad. That was because there had been a lot of changes in our lives besides who I walked to school with.
- 4 We turned the corner onto Sixth Avenue and passed by all the familiar places in our neighborhood: New World, which is a coffee shop, and Steve-Dan’s, which is my all-time favorite store because it sells art supplies, and Cuppa Joe, which is a new coffee shop, and Universal, which is a dry cleaner, and the Daily Grind, which is *another* new coffee shop. Over the summer Lexie and her friends started going to the Daily Grind to order Mocha Moxies, which they say are coffee drinks but which really look like giant milk shakes. Whenever Lexie starts talking about how she’s grown-up enough to drink coffee what I want to say back to her is, “Mom and Dad don’t squirt a tower of whipped cream on top of their coffee,” but one thing I have learned lately is when not to say something.
- 5 When Dad and JBIII and I passed Monk’s, which is a gift store, I could feel JBIII’s eyes on me. Well, not actually on me, which would be gross, but suddenly I could tell he was looking at me and I knew why. We were now one half of a block away from Emily Dickinson, and JBIII and I had decided that no matter what anyone thought, we were simply too old to be walked right up to the door of our school by a parent.
- 6 “Dad,” I said, “JBIII and I are ten years old now.” (JBIII was actually a lot closer to eleven, while I was just barely ten.)
- 7 “Yes, you are,” agreed Dad.

8        “And we think that—” JBIII frowned fiercely at me and I tried to remember the exact speech he had made me memorize the day before. “I mean,” I said, backing up, “and we feel strongly that we should be allowed”—JBIII poked my arm—“that, um, we’re responsible enough to walk the rest of the way to school by ourselves. Every day.”

9        “You can stand here and watch us,” said JBIII. And then he added quickly, “Sir.”

10       “Well . . .,” said my father.

11       Dad has let me do this 2x before, but now JBIII and I were asking to do it regularly, and my father has a teensy problem with change, whether it’s good or bad.

12       “Please?” I said, and now JBIII glared at me. He had also warned me not to whine. “Please, Father?” I said calmly.

13       “I suppose so.”

14       “Yes!” I exclaimed.

15       “Thank you, sir,” said JBIII.

16       “But remember—I’ll be watching you.”

17       “I know,” I said. “Don’t kiss me,” I added, and JBIII and I ran down the block. Just before we reached Emily Dickinson I waved backward over my shoulder to Dad.

18       JBIII and I wound our way through the halls of Emily Dickinson. We passed by the first-grade room that Justine Lebarro had been in the year before, and then we passed our old fourth-grade room. There was Mr. Potter, our teacher from last year, talking to his new students.

19       We kept on walking until we came to room 5A. I peeked through the doorway, then stepped back and flattened myself against the wall like a spy. “She’s in there,” I whispered to JBIII. “Ms. Brody.”

20       Our teacher was new to Emily Dickinson. All we knew about her was her name.

21       JBIII peeked in, too. “She looks all right,” he whispered to me.

22       The truth was that she looked very, very young, like if you switched her pants and her shirt for a white dress and a veil she could be a bride. I kept that thought to myself, though, because I could just hear Lexie clucking her tongue and saying to me, “A person can get married at any age, Pearl.” But still in my head all brides were young.

23       “Afraid to go in?” said a voice from behind JBIII and me, and we both jumped.

24       I turned around to see Jill DiNunzio, who is a person I could live without.

25       “No,” I said, doing an eye roll.

26       “So what are you waiting for?” she asked.

27       “Well, not you. Come on, JBThree.”

28       JBIII and I marched into our new classroom, leaving Jill behind.

29       Fifth grade had officially begun.

