

The Red, White, And Blue Basketball

Learn the Key Words

boss	(bôs, bos)	a person who tells workers what to do <i>The <u>boss</u> told the men to work faster.</i>
ceiling	(sē' ling)	the inside top of a room <i>The light was hanging from the middle of the <u>ceiling</u>.</i>
clumsy	(klum' zē)	not moving smoothly; awkward <i>The <u>clumsy</u> student tripped.</i>
effort	(ef' ert)	the act of trying hard <i>He made an <u>effort</u> to climb the mountain.</i>
member	(mem' bər)	one who belongs to a particular group <i>She is a <u>member</u> of the Girl Scouts.</i>
purchase	(pēr' chəs)	buy <i>You can <u>purchase</u> salt at the supermarket.</i>

Preview:

1. Read the title.
2. Look at the picture.
3. Read the first paragraph of the story.
4. Then answer the following question.

You learned from your preview that

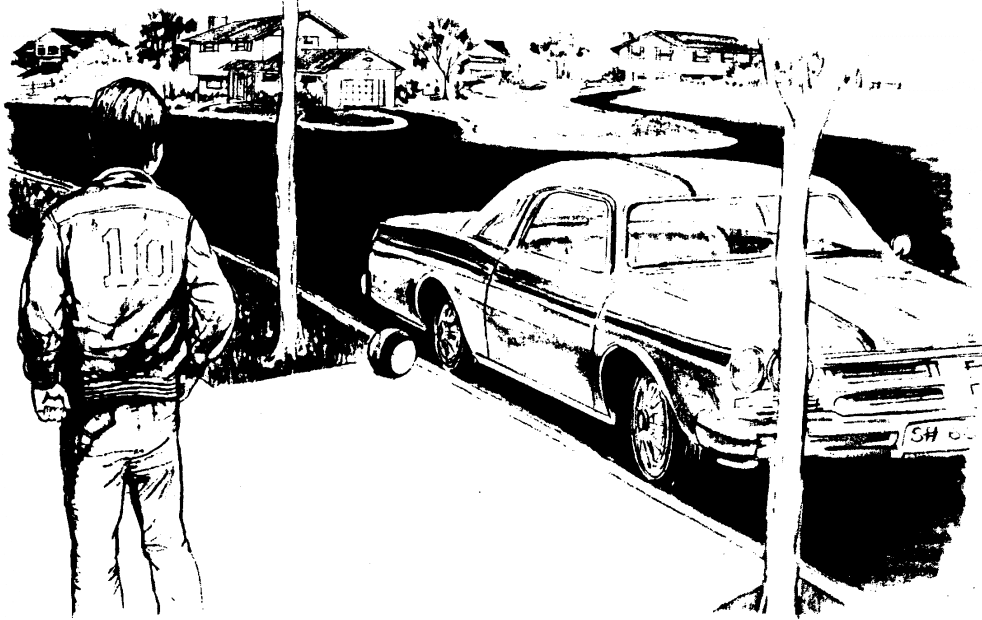
- a. Willy's father was a teacher.
- b. Willy had a birthday last week.
- c. Willy was thirteen years old.
- d. Willy wanted a new basketball.

Turn to the Comprehension Check on page 4 for the right answer.

Now read the story.

Read to find out how Willy made a new friend.

The Red, White, And Blue Basketball



That basketball is exactly the kind that Willy wants to own.

Willy was in a bad mood. As he headed toward First Avenue, he kicked at every stone in sight. Things were different at home since his father had lost his job at the factory. The boss had said that there just wasn't enough work for everyone. Two months had passed, and Willy's father was still without a job. With Willy's eleventh birthday a week away, he knew he wouldn't get that basketball he wanted. With anger, he kicked at another stone.

Willy arrived at First Avenue, a beautiful street with tall trees

and neatly painted houses. Being here always made Willy feel good.

The new automobile parked in front of the Miller house caught his attention. Bending forward to examine its black racing stripe, Willy noticed something on the sidewalk next to the car. It was a new basketball—a red, white, and blue basketball, just like the one he had wanted for his birthday.

Gently, Willy lifted the ball from the sidewalk. "The Millers have grown children. This can't belong to them," he told

himself. Willy's heart pounded as he looked quickly up and down First Avenue and saw no one was around. "Might as well take this home," he decided.

After supper, Willy rested on his bed and tossed the basketball toward the ceiling. His sixteen-year-old brother, Roy, entered the room. "Don't break anything. It's my room too," Roy reminded him.

"Where did you get that anyway?" asked Roy, admiring the basketball.

Willy told him.

"Did you make an effort to

locate the ball's owner?" asked Roy.

"Let the owner make an effort to locate me," replied Willy, still tossing the ball toward the ceiling.

"You don't really mean that, Willy," said Roy. "You have something that doesn't belong to you, and that's like stealing."

Willy kept his eyes on the spinning colors of the basketball. He didn't want to look at his brother just then.

"I never thought of it that way," Willy said sadly. "Maybe I could go to the lost and found counter at school to see if someone reported one missing." Willy glanced at his brother, and let the ball drop onto his bed.

"Why not leave a note at the lost and found?" suggested Roy, watching Willy carefully.

Willy grumbled, "If I do, everyone in school might claim it."

Roy answered, "Not if you ask them to describe it and tell you where it was lost."

Willy knew that his brother was right about making an effort to find the owner, but giving up the basketball would not be easy. He wanted so much to keep it.

"All right," he agreed finally. "I'll write the note tomorrow."

The next day, Roy called to Willy, "Someone named Greg Evans wants to talk to you on the telephone about the basketball."

"Greg Evans, that rich kid?" snarled Willy. "His parents could buy him a dozen basketballs. Besides, he's so clumsy he trips over his own feet. What would he do with a basketball?"

Roy recognized the hurt in Willy's voice and suggested gently, "Maybe it isn't his ball."

"Do you want to bet?" asked Willy, walking slowly to the telephone. "Hello, Greg," he said.

"I saw your note, Willy. Was it a red, white, and blue basketball? I lost mine on First Avenue yesterday," explained Greg.

Willy couldn't answer right away. He swallowed hard. "I guess it's your basketball, Greg."

"I'm so glad you're the one who found it, Willy," said Greg. "I could never find the courage to speak to you before because I know how good you are at sports. But now that you found my ball. . . ." Greg paused.

"Willy," Greg began again, "do you think you could come to my house and play basketball with me? I mean, could you help me stop being so clumsy? I'd like to be a member of the team."

As much as Willy wanted to be angry at Greg, he couldn't. After all, Greg was trying to be his friend.

"Basketball is easy when you know how," answered Willy.

"Would you come to my house sometime and shoot baskets with me?" asked Greg. "We have a basketball hoop on our garage."

"You do? Sure, I'll come right over," said Willy, surprised at his own reply. "And, Greg, I'll bring your basketball."

Willy hung up the telephone. Roy, surprised by his brother's cheerful mood, asked, "Isn't that his ball?"

"Sure, it's his ball,"

answered Willy, "but I was wrong about Greg. He's a nice kid."

"So are you," added Roy, proudly.

Willy smiled and took the basketball off his bed. "Roy, I'm going to find a job in the neighborhood after school and purchase my own basketball. I could even help out until Dad's boss calls him back to work."

"I'm proud to have you as a member of this family," said Roy, smiling. "Now I can tell you my surprise. I saved some money from my after school earnings for your birthday. Use it to purchase your basketball a little sooner."

Grinning, Willy stated, "Thanks a lot!" and bounced the basketball across the room to Roy.

"You're welcome, and you deserve it," replied Roy, slamming the red, white, and blue basketball back at Willy. Willy caught it easily and headed for Greg's house.