

The Big Ear

1

She had to audition twice. The first time she auditioned at the Royal Academy of Music in London, she was turned down. She was told it was because she was deaf. Evelyn Glennie was indeed deaf. She was born in Scotland in 1965, and she started losing her hearing at the age of eight. By twelve, she was profoundly deaf. She could not hear sounds at all.

2

The Academy told Glennie that it didn't have a clue as to the future of a deaf musician. Glennie did not feel this was a good reason to be rejected. She insisted she be treated like other students. They were never asked about the future. Instead, they were accepted or rejected due to their ability to perform and to understand and love the art of creating sounds.

3

Glennie was told she could audition again. This time she was not rejected. She was accepted for all the right reasons. Since then, Glennie has become a world-class musician. She has won many prizes. She is a percussionist. The instruments she plays must be struck or hit. Drums, gongs, and bells are examples of percussion instruments. Cymbals, rattles, or tambourines are other instruments that a percussionist might play.

4

Glennie lip reads. Lip reading may help her know what people say, but how does she know she is making the correct musical sounds? Glennie often plays with other musicians. She plays in large orchestras. Orchestras have musicians playing all different kinds of instruments. How does Glennie know how to play with the other musicians? How does she know how loud and soft her notes should be?

5

Glennie says, "I see the body as a big ear." She uses her eyes to see drum skins move as they vibrate. She hears music "through my hands, through my arms, my cheekbones, my skull, my tummy, my chest, my legs, and so on." Glennie often plays barefoot, helping her feel vibrations through her feet. She has become so skillful at feeling vibrations come through her hand that at times she can feel tiny differences with just the tiniest part of her finger.

Your Name: _____ Partner: _____

The Big Ear (cont.)

First

Silently read "The Big Ear." You might see words you do not know and read parts you do not understand. Keep reading! Determine what the story is mainly about.

Then

Sum up the story. Write the main actions and most important information. If someone reads your summary, that person should know it is this story you are writing about.

**After
That**

Read the story again. Use a pencil to circle or mark words you don't know. Note places that confuse you. Underline the main action or idea of each paragraph.

Next

Meet with your partner. Help each other find these words in the text.

audition percussionist rejected vibration orchestra

Read the sentences around the words. Think about how they fit in the whole story. Define the words. Which information from the text helped you figure out the meaning of the words? An example is given for you.

Word	Definition	Information That Helps
audition		
percussionist		
rejected		
vibration	movement of something back and forth	Glennie used her eyes to see the drum skins move as they vibrated.
orchestra		

Your Name: _____

The Big Ear (cont.)

Now

Answer the story questions below.

1. Was Glennie able to hear some sounds at the age of nine? Defend your answer using information from the story.

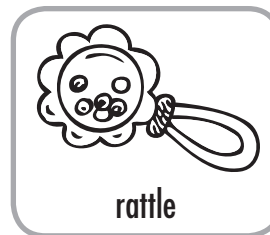
2. Are the following percussion instruments? For each, check **Yes** or **No**. Use information from the text to support your answer.



☐ Yes ☐ No



☐ Yes ☐ No



☐ Yes ☐ No



☐ Yes ☐ No

3. You are told that Glennie was accepted for all the right reasons. According to Glennie, what are all the right reasons?

4. Which two senses does Glennie use to "hear"? Explain how she uses them.

Sense #1: _____

Sense #2: _____

Your Name: _____

The Big Ear (cont.)

Then

Reread the entire story one last time. Think about if this story is fiction or nonfiction. Think about if it is autobiographical (written by the person whose life is being described) or biographical (written about a person by someone else).

5. Is this story fiction or nonfiction? How can you tell? _____

Is this story autobiographical or biographical? How can you tell? _____

6. Imagine you are Glennie. You have just finished your first audition, and you have been given the news of your rejection. Write a few lines in which you explain what happened and how you feel. As this will be in autobiographical form, use the pronoun "I" when referring to yourself. Also, be sure to use information you learned from the story.

7. In which paragraph of the story do you find out what instrument Glennie plays?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Why do you think the author waited until that point to tell you?

**Learn
More**

Find out the difference between brass, percussion, stringed, and woodwind instruments. On the back of this paper, write a short paragraph in which you compare them. Give a few examples of each kind of instrument.

- What should someone have for breakfast before flying into a hurricane; we find out the answer at the end of the last paragraph.
- paragraph 2; this shows us why a meteorologist would need to fly into hurricane and that Evans is doing this because it is his job to do so.

“The Dig” (pages 36–39)

Summary: At an archeological dig, some people find a bicycle, but at first they don’t know what it is. The people are from a future time when bicycles are no longer used.

- the future; at the very end of the play; Bali; refers to the 21st century as ancient.
- Arti; he says, “Archeologists study the past by digging up old things.”
- It was very expensive; LuLu says the bike cost a lot because of its light frame.
- An intact artifact would be better, because it is whole and it would be easier to determine what it is or comes from.
- They are from the future, where flypacks are the main way to get around. To them, the 21st century is an ancient time. The “bar with a T” = handlebars.

“Scurvy Credit” (pages 40–43)

Summary: The symptoms of scurvy and how to prevent it are described. Credit is given to James Lind, but a commander sprouted soybeans on his ships long before.

Vocabulary: dreaded; fatigue; soluble; fester; credit

- Possible answers: gums spongy and swollen, loose teeth or falling out, fatigue, legs hurt, bruises, red-blue spots on skin
- No, because in the story we are told that ascorbic acid is Vitamin C and that sweet green peppers, broccoli, and kale contain Vitamin C.
- He was out at sea for months, but his men didn’t suffer from scurvy; every ship carried open tubs in which to plant and sprout soybeans for the crew to eat.
- We know that Vitamin C, which is easily available, can cure it. To treat or prevent it, one can eat citrus fruits, broccoli, kale, or even soybeans.
- 1: symptoms of scurvy; 2: why scurvy was dreaded; 3: James Lind and the cure for scurvy; 4: vitamin C information; 5: how Zheng He prevented scurvy

“Rat Tale” (pages 44–47)

Summary: A story is told about a bounty meant to decrease the rat population and how it backfired. Huge rats are discovered. A bounty is being offered for their tails.

Vocabulary: *bounty* = “reward or price paid for something”; *decrease* = “go down, lessen”; *officials* = “people in charge, officers”; *lopping* = “cutting off, chopping”

- They wanted people to kill the rats so the rat population would go down.
- No, because people started lopping off the rat tails and letting them go so the rats would breed more rats.
- He felt excited and anxious to tell others, he wasn’t sure if they would believe him; he came “charging in,” and he cried out the news.
- They had been brought to the United States to be sold as pets; someone let them go in the Everglades.
- tale* = “story”; *tail* = “end of an animal”; the story is a tale about rat tails.
- They might be harmed because the rat population might increase if people start cutting off rat tails and releasing the rats so they can breed.
- paragraph 1; it acts as an introduction and makes sure the reader knows what a bounty and incentive are.

“The Big Ear” (pages 48–51)

Summary: A deaf woman has become a world-class percussionist. She uses her whole body as a big ear and has trained herself to use every part of her body to “hear” music.

Vocabulary: *audition* = “try out”; *percussionist* = “musician who plays instruments that must be struck or hit”; *rejected* = “turned down”; *orchestra* = “many musicians playing different instruments together”

- Yes, she wasn’t profoundly deaf until 12.
- no*: violin or guitar; you do not hit these instruments; *yes*: rattle (shaken, causing parts inside to strike the sides) and xylophone (struck with sticks).
- having the ability to perform and to understand and love the creation of sounds
- sight*: lip reads so knows what people say, looks at drum skins vibrating; *touch*: feels vibrations through feet or other body parts
- nonfiction*: It describes a real person and facts about her life; *biographical*: no first-person narrative, when Glennie’s words are spoken, they are quoted.
- paragraph 3; might make reader wonder what kind of instrument she could play

“Conundrum” (pages 52–55)

Summary: A teacher gives her class a conundrum that they solve. The puzzle deals with how a boy goes from an island to the mainland across a bridge with a guard.

Vocabulary: a. *enigma* and *conundrum*; b. *prohibit*; c. *bewildered*

- “The island is surrounded by man-eating sharks.”
- He had to fall asleep and had to send people back to where they came from; if the guard never fell asleep, he would know where the boy was coming from.
- They were very confused, puzzled, or bewildered.
- No, because he would not have gotten halfway across before the guard woke up and saw where he was coming from.
- a. 2 and 3; b. 5; c. 1; d. 4
- gives readers time to wonder about the problem and try to think of a solution
- problem*: boy on island, wants to get to mainland; *facts*: only way across is bridge, sharks in water, takes 1 minute to cross bridge, guard halfway on bridge sleeps 30 seconds and then awake for 5 minutes, lets no one pass and sends anyone back; *solution*: boy runs to sleeping guard and turns around so it looks as if came from mainland, guard sends boy “back” to mainland.

“Small Deer” (pages 56–59)

Summary: Small Deer is a character from Indonesian folk tales. Small Deer falls into a pit and tricks other animals into jumping inside and then throwing her out.

Vocabulary: a. False; b. True; c. True; d. False; e. False

- four: Small Deer, Pig, Tiger, and Elephant
- Yes, because she told Pig he would be thrown out if he sneezed, and then she was the one who sneezed once there were enough animals to throw her out.
- He meant that the story was great and surprising.
- No, because we are told that “Teresa adored folk tales from other countries” and that Small Deer is similar to a character from African folk tales.
- Teresa likes to read Indonesian folk tales, and she reads one about Small Deer. Her brother says he likes the Small Deer tale and tries to use the same trick.
- “You can make me leave if you want.” No, because you wouldn’t have known that Small Deer used a sneeze to get out of something.

“Mother, May I?” (pages 60–63)

Summary: A boy asks to make a kite and fly around the world. His mother is distracted by her phone and doesn’t pay attention to him. She is shocked when he does it.

Vocabulary: *persistent* = “keeping to something, not giving up”; *peak* = “top”; *elevation* = “height”; *gust* = “strong blast of wind”

- He needed to be at an elevation at least as high as Frisco Hill, to run full speed, and to have a strong gust of wind.
- He was so busy working on his kite that he hadn’t pestered her for two days; She said, “Of course, he’s going to fail.”