

Read the short story. Then answer each question.

The Bonfire in the Sea

Long, long ago, in Australia, it is said fish could travel as easily on land as they could swim in water.

It happened, so the story goes, that the whole fish tribe had been playing tag along a sandy beach near the sea. At last, they became tired of the game. Fin-fin, the leader of the fish, said, "Let us coast down the great, black rock."

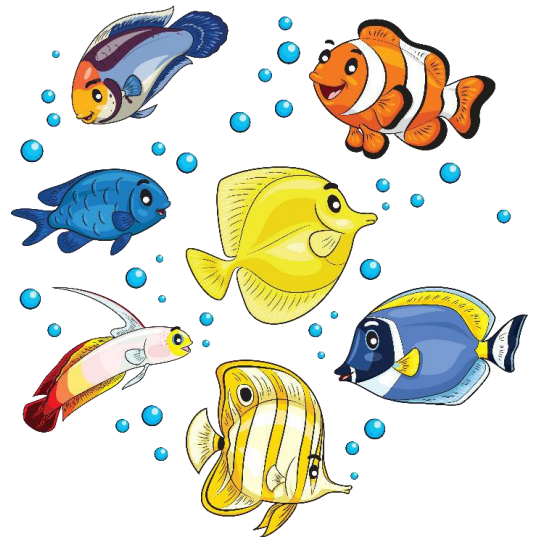
Now beyond the level shore where the fish had been playing tag, there were cliffs and rocks. Some of the rocks rose straight out of the water; others sloped toward the sandy beach.

High above the rest towered the great, black rock. The fish climbed to the top. Then, one after another, they followed the leader, each gliding head first down the rock. It was fine sport!

Then the fish formed a circle and danced while Fin-fin slid down the rock alone. Again and again, he climbed to the top and slid down as swiftly as an arrow glides from the bow. Finally he turned a somersault at the foot of the rock and then called to the fish to stop dancing.

"It is time to cook dinner," said Fin-fin. "There is a good place for a camp under the trees on the tall cliff over there."

The fish climbed to the top of the cliff overhanging the sea. They gathered wood and heaped it high at the edge of the cliff. When all was ready for the bonfire, Fin-fin rubbed two sticks briskly together. Soon a spark fell upon the wood, and instantly the flames leaped upward. Then the fish put some roots in front of the fire to roast.



Grade 5 Reading Comprehension Worksheet

While the roots were cooking, the fish stretched themselves under the trees. They had almost fallen asleep when suddenly great drops of rain came splashing down.

A dark cloud, which they had not noticed, had covered the sun.

The rain fell hard and fast and soon put out the fire.

Now, you know this was very serious because people in those days had no matches, and it was difficult to light a fire. Then an icy wind began to blow too, and the fish were soon shivering in the cold.



“We shall freeze to death unless we can build a fire again,” cried Fin-fin.

He tried to kindle a flame by rubbing two sticks together. He could not produce even one spark.

“It is of no use,” said Fin-fin. “The wood is too wet. We shall have to wait for the sun to shine again.”

A tiny fish came forward and bowed before Fin-fin, saying, “Ask my father, Flying-fish, to light the fire. He is skilled in magic, and he can do more than most fish.”

So Fin-fin asked Flying-fish to light the fire once more.

Flying-fish knelt before the smoldering ashes and fanned briskly with his fins.

A tiny thread of smoke curled upward, and a feeble red glow could be seen in the ashes.

When the tribe of fish saw this, they crowded close around Flying-fish, keeping their backs toward the cold wind. He told them to go to the other side because he wanted to fan the fire.

By and by the spark grew into a flame, and the bonfire burned brightly.

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“Bring more wood,” cried Flying-fish.

The fish gathered wood and piled it upon the fire. The red flames roared and sputtered, and crackled.

“We shall soon be warm now,” said Fin-fin.

Then the fish crowded around the fire, closer and closer. Suddenly a blast of wind swept across the cliff from the direction of the land and blew the fire toward the fish.

They sprang back, forgetting that they were on the edge of the cliff. And down, down, down, went the whole fish tribe to the bottom of the sea.

The water felt warm, for the strong wind had driven the fire down below too.

There, indeed, was the bonfire at the bottom of the sea, burning as brightly as ever.

More wonderful still, the fire never went out like fires do on land. The water at the bottom of the sea has been warm ever since that day.

That is why, on frosty days, the fish disappear from the surface of the water. They dive to the bottom of the sea where they can keep warm and comfortable around the magic bonfire.

At least this is what some people say.



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Questions:

1. How do you think Fin-fin became leader of the fish?

2. Why do all the fish crowd around Flying-fish?

3. What does the word **feeble** mean when it says, "a **feeble** red glow could be seen in the ashes?"

Grade 5 Reading Comprehension Worksheet

Answers:

1. How do you think Fin-fin became leader of the fish?

Fin-fin became the leader of the fish because he told the others what they needed to do.

2. Why do all the fish crowd around Flying-fish?

All the fish crowd around Flying-fish because he managed to start the fire in the cold rain.

3. What does the word **feeble** mean when it says, "a **feeble** red glow could be seen in the ashes?"

The word **feeble** means lacking in physical strength.