

Read the short story. Then answer each question.

## Sennin the Hermit

In the far-away land of Japan, there was a little village that lay at the foot of a high mountain.

Every day the children went to play on the grassy bank near a pond at one end of the village. They threw stones into the water. They fished, and they sailed their toy boats. They picked the wild flowers that grew in the fields nearby. They carried with them rice to eat, and, from morning until evening, they played near the pond.

One day, while they were playing, the children were surprised to see an old man with a long, white beard walking toward them. He came from the direction of the mountain.

The children stopped their games to watch the old man. He came into their midst and, patting them upon their heads easily, made them his friends.

The children continued their play because they knew that the old man was kind.

The man watched the children, and when it was time for them to go home, he said, "Come to the flat rock on the side of the mountain tomorrow and I will show you some wonderful games."

Then he climbed up the mountain once more and disappeared.



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The following morning, the children went to the flat rock. They found the old man waiting for them.

“Now, my dear children,” he said, “I am going to amuse you. Look here!”

He picked up some dry sticks. He blew at the ends of the sticks, and at once they became sprays of beautiful cherry, plum, and peach blossoms. He passed a branch of each of the flowers to the girls.

Then he took a stone and threw it into the air. The stone turned into a dove!

Another stone became an eagle, another a nightingale, or any bird a boy chose to name.

“Now,” said the old man, “I will show you some animals that I am sure will make you laugh.”

The children clapped their hands.

He recited some verses, and a company of monkeys came leaping upon the rock. The monkeys jumped about, grinning at the same time and performing funny tricks.

The children clapped their hands again.

Then the old man bowed to them and said, “Children, I can play no more games today. It is time for you to go back to the village. Farewell.”

The old man turned to go. He went up the mountain in the direction of a cave. The children tried to follow him, but in spite of his age, he was more nimble than they. They ran far enough, however, to see him enter the cave.

When they reached the entrance, the old man had disappeared.

The cave was surrounded by fragrant flowers, but the children did not dare to go into its depths.



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Suddenly one of the girls pointed upwards and cried, "There is the old grandfather!"

The others looked up, and there, standing on a cloud over the top of the mountain, was the old man.

"Let us go home now," said one of the boys.

On the way, they met two men of the village whom their parents had sent to search for them. When the children had told their story, one of the men exclaimed, "Ah, happy children! The kind old man is surely Sennin, the wonderful Hermit of the Mountain!"



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### Questions:

1. Why do you think the children were surprised to see the old man at first?

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2. How do you think the old man was able to do all the things to amuse the children?

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3. What does the word **nimble** mean in the sentence, "In spite of his age he was more **nimble** than they"?

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4. Why do you think the old man tells the children it is time for them to go home at the end of the story?

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### **Answers:**

1. Why do you think the children were surprised to see the old man at first?

The children were surprised to see the old man as they had not met him before.

2. How do you think the old man was able to do all the things to amuse the children?

(Answer will vary) for example: The old man was able to do all those things as he's a magician.

3. What does the word **nimble** mean in the sentence, "In spite of his age he was more **nimble** than they"?

The word nimble means quick and light in movement.

4. Why do you think the old man tells the children it is time for them to go home at the end of the story?

The old man tells the children to go home at the end of the story, because he did not want their parents to worry about them being gone.