

## A Lion in the Bedroom



When James woke up, he found a lion sleeping on the floor next to his bed. Because he was five years old, he thought this was awesome.

“Hello, lion!” he yelled.

The lion, a female with a big mane and a patchy coat, opened one eye and stared at him lazily. Then she turned over and fell back asleep.

James considered petting the lion or scratching its belly — Trixie, his old cat, loved belly scratches — but he was proud enough of his new pet that he wanted to tell his parents first. So, he jumped out of bed and walked into the kitchen. His father was eating breakfast.

“Do you want me to strip the bathroom moldings this weekend?” his father asked his mother. “Or can it wait a week?”

“It can wait,” she said, frowning. “But you should really *want* to strip the moldings.”

“I got a lion!” yelled James.

“That’s nice, dear,” said his mother.

“Well played, son,” said his father. “Most five-year-olds go with something showier, like an ocelot or a puma. But you’ve gone the classic route.”

“I’m naming it Trixie II: Return of Trixie,” said James. “I want to ride her to school.”

“Sure,” his father said, “everyone wants to ride their lion to school. But where will you park it?”

“Bill,” his mother said. “We’ve talked about your sarcasm.”

“It’s not sarcasm,” his father. “I’m being fu—”

James’s father didn’t get to finish his sentence. It was interrupted by an ear-splitting roar, coming from James’s bedroom.

For a few seconds, neither one of his parents said anything.

“Maybe I’ll name her Tiger,” said James. “To confuse people.”

“James,” said his father quietly. “What was that?”

“That was Trixie II.”

“Oh dear me,” said his mother, crossing herself.

James’s father craned his head to peer down the hall towards James’s bedroom. After a moment, he knelt down in front of his son and put his hands on his shoulders.

“James,” he said. “I need you to be completely, 100% honest with me. No make-believe, no story-time? Can you do that?”

James nodded. “Sure I can.” He noticed a droplet of sweat dripping down his father’s forehead.

“OK, great,” said his father, in a strange, small voice. “James. Is there a lion...a real lion...in your bedroom?”

“Dad,” said James, patiently. “We’ve been over this.”

His father stared at him.

James sighed. “Of course there is, dad.”

“Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!” his mother screamed. “Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhh!”

“Helen, stop it!” snapped his father. His father stood up. “This is ridiculous. I don’t know what that noise was, but there is not a lion in your bedroom.”

James’s father walked angrily to the broom closet. He opened the door, pulled out a mop with a long wooden handle and began marching towards the hallway.

“For gosh sake, Bill,” his mother said, grabbing him by the shoulder. “Let’s just get out of here and call the police. Or animal control. Or someone. *Please.*”

“And tell them what?” His father wheeled around to face her. “What? That we have a *lion* in the house? Oh, I’m sure they’ll send a car right out.”

“Tell them her name is Trixie II,” said James. “Someone might have met her before.”

“Bill...”

“I’m not calling *anyone*,” his father said. With that, he turned and stomped down the hallway. James and his mother looked down after him.

“Do you think dad and Trixie II will get along?” James asked his mother. “Dad is so moody these days and Trixie II is just kind of...mellow.”

“Quiet,” his mother hissed.

They watched his father approach the door. He reached for the handle and, holding the mop high in his other hand, gently swung the door open and poked his head around the corner.

James barely had time to be curious about his father's reaction before his father turned on his heels, slammed the door shut and went sprinting down the hallway towards James and his mother.

*"Get out of the house right now!"* his father hollered as he ran. *"Go! Run! Now! Move! Move! Move!"*

His father practically shoved James and his mother through the living room and out the front door. When they were outside, his father doubled over, panting for breath.

"Where in all heck did you get a *lion*?" he yelled at James.

"You mean it's *real*?" his mother screamed, her eyes bugging. "Ahhhhhhhhhh!"

"They come from Africa, right?" said James.

By this time, neighbors had heard the commotion and begun gathering. Their next-door neighbors were the Horowitzes. Mr. Horowitz walked up to James's father.

"Bill, is something the matter?"

James's father turned and stared at Mr. Horowitz. "There's a lion in my son's bedroom."

Mr. Horowitz threw a quick, worried glance at his wife, who was standing on their front lawn. His wife shrugged.

"O.K.," said Mr. Horowitz, slowly. "Do you want us to call somebody?"

"Her name is Trixie II," explained James. "Or maybe Ms. Botticelli. I like how that name sounds."

"Call somebody!" his father yelled. "Call anybody! There's a lion in my son's bedroom."

"Helen," said Mr. Horowitz quietly. "Should we call somebody?"

"I don't even know," said James's mother, breaking down in sobs. "I never know."

By this time a dozen neighbors had gathered in front of James's house. All of them were yelling at each other, trying to figure out what had happened, when suddenly everyone froze. There, at the front door of James house, was a massive African lion. Everyone stared at it, completely silent.

For a few moments, the lion stared back. Finally, she let out a long sigh.

"Guys," the lion said, "I know I'm a guest and I don't mean to be a pain, but I had

a really late night last night and I have a client meeting at 10, so I was really hoping to sleep in. Do you think you guys could keep it down just a little bit? Thanks.”

And with that, the lion turned and walked back in the house.

“What about Rambo?” said James. “That’s a cool name. *Rambo*. Yeah, I like that.”

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What does James find in his bedroom?

- A** a tiger
- B** a lion
- C** Trixie, his old cat

2. How do James's parents change in the story?

- A** At first they don't believe there is a lion in their house. Then they become scared there might be a lion in their house.
- B** At first they are scared there might be a lion in their house. Then they don't believe there is a lion in their house.
- C** At first they don't want James to have a lion, and then they change their minds.

3. When James tells his parents that he has a lion, they do not believe him. Which details from the passage support this conclusion?

- A** James's father grabs a mop and goes to look in James's room.
- B** James's mother wants to call the police or animal control.
- C** James's mother says, "That's nice," and his father makes jokes.

4. Read the following sentences:

"'James,' he said. 'I need you to be completely, 100% honest with me. No make-believe, no story-time? Can you do that?'

"James nodded. 'Sure I can.' He noticed a droplet of sweat dripping down his father's forehead.

"'OK, great,' said his father, in a strange, small voice. 'James. Is there a lion...a real lion...in your bedroom?'"

How does James's father feel at this point in the story?

- A annoyed
- B frightened
- C happy

5. What is this passage mostly about?

- A James finds a lion in his bedroom and tells his parents.
- B James misses his cat Trixie, so his parents buy him a lion named Trixie II.
- C James is scared of the lion in his bedroom, and his father hits it with a broom.

6. Read the following sentences: "‘It’s not sarcasm,’ his father. ‘I’m being fu—’ James’s father didn’t get to finish his sentence. It was **interrupted** by an ear-splitting roar, coming from James’s bedroom."

In this sentence, what does "**interrupted**" most nearly mean?

- A became louder
- B kept going
- C stopped

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

James tells his parents that there is a lion in his bedroom \_\_\_\_\_ they do not believe him.

- A but
- B so
- C because

8. How does James feel about the lion in his bedroom?

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9. What does the lion do at the end of the passage?

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10. What makes this story unrealistic, or unlike real life?

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## Teacher Guide &amp; Answers

**Passage Reading Level:** Lexile 570

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- B so
- C because

8. How does James feel about the lion in his bedroom?

**Suggested answer:** James feels proud/excited.

9. What does the lion do at the end of the passage?

**Suggested answer:** She comes to the front door of the house and speaks, asking everyone to be quiet.

10. What makes this story unrealistic, or unlike real life?

**Suggested answer:** Answers may vary and should be supported by the passage. Students may say that this story is unrealistic because it is not likely for a young boy to wake up with a lion in his room, and lions cannot speak like the lion in this story does.