



Read the story. Then answer the questions that follow.

from *The Magician's Elephant*

by Kate DiCamillo

1 At the end of the century before last, in the market square of the city of Baltese, there stood a boy with a hat on his head and a coin in his hand. The boy's name was Peter Augustus Duchene, and the coin that he held did not belong to him but was instead the property of his guardian, an old soldier named Vilna Lutz, who had sent the boy to the market for fish and bread.

2 That day in the market square, in the midst of the entirely unremarkable and absolutely ordinary stalls of the fishmongers and cloth merchants and bakers and silversmiths, there had appeared, without warning or fanfare, the red tent of a fortuneteller. Attached to the fortuneteller's tent was a piece of paper, and penned upon the paper in a cramped but unapologetic hand were these words: *The most profound and difficult questions that could possibly be posed by the human mind or heart will be answered within for the price of one florit.*

3 Peter read the small sign once, and then again. The audacity of the words, their dizzying promise, made it difficult, suddenly, for him to breathe. He looked down at the coin, the single florit, in his hand.

4 "But I cannot do it," he said to himself. "Truly, I cannot, for if I do, Vilna Lutz will ask where the money has gone and I will have to lie, and it is a very dishonorable thing to lie."

5 He put the coin in his pocket. He took the soldier's hat off his head and then put it back on. He stepped away from the sign and came back to it and stood considering, again, the outrageous and wonderful words.

6 "But I must know," he said at last. He took the florit from his pocket. "I want to know the truth. And so I will do it. But I will not lie about it, and in that way, I will remain at least partly honorable." With these words, Peter stepped into the tent and handed the fortuneteller the coin.

7 And she, without even looking at him, said, "One florit will buy you one answer and only one. Do you understand?"

8 "Yes," said Peter.

9 He stood in the small patch of light making its sullen way through the open flap of the tent. He let the fortuneteller take his hand. She examined it slowly, moving her eyes back and forth and back and forth, as if there were a whole host of very small words inscribed there, an entire book about Peter Augustus Duchene composed atop his palm.

10 "Huh," she said at last. She dropped his hand and squinted up at his face. "But, of course, you are just a boy."

11 "I am ten years old," said Peter. He took the hat from his head and stood as straight and tall as he was able. "And I am training to become a soldier, brave and true. But it does not matter how old I am. You took the florit, so now you must give me my answer."



- 12 “A soldier brave and true?” said the fortuneteller. She laughed and spat on the ground. “Very well, soldier brave and true, if you say it is so, then it is so. Ask me your question.”
- 13 Peter felt a small stab of fear. What if, after all this time, he could not bear the truth? What if he did not really want to know?
- 14 “Speak,” said the fortuneteller. “Ask.”
- 15 “My parents,” said Peter.
- 16 “That is your question?” said the fortuneteller. “They are dead.”
- 17 Peter’s hands trembled. “That is not my question,” he said. “I know that already. You must tell me something that I do not know. You must tell me of another—you must tell me . . .”
- 18 The fortuneteller narrowed her eyes. “Ah,” she said. “Her? Your sister? That is your question? Very well, she lives.”
- 19 Peter’s heart seized upon the words. He closed his eyes. He concentrated. “If she lives, then I must find her, so my question is, how do I make my way there, to where she is?”
- 20 He kept his eyes closed; he waited.
- 21 “The elephant,” said the fortuneteller.
- 22 “What?” Peter said. He opened his eyes, certain that he had misunderstood.
- 23 “You must follow the elephant,” said the fortuneteller. “She will lead you there.”

Answer the questions. Mark your answers to questions 1–3 on the Answer Form to the right.

Answer Form

1 (A) (B) (C) (D)

2 (A) (B) (C) (D)

3 (A) (B) (C) (D)

Number
Correct

3

1 Which event belongs in a summary of the story?

- A** Peter looks down at the coin in his hand.
- B** Peter takes off the soldier’s hat, then puts it back on.
- C** The fortuneteller calls Peter a brave soldier.
- D** The fortuneteller tells Peter to follow the elephant.



2 Which sentence expresses an opinion?

- A** Peter has a coin that belongs to his guardian.
- B** Peter sees a fortuneteller's sign pinned to a tent.
- C** Peter learns that his sister is still alive.
- D** Peter makes a good decision in giving up his coin.

3 Which sentence **best** summarizes paragraphs 4 through 6?

- A** Peter walks around the fortuneteller's red tent.
- B** Peter worries about telling a lie to his guardian, Vilna Lutz.
- C** Peter has trouble deciding whether to visit the fortuneteller.
- D** Peter tells himself that the truth is definitely worth knowing.

4 Write a brief summary of the excerpt. Include at least **three** details from the story.



Self Check

Go back and see what you can check off on the Self Check on page 43.