

Name: _____

Singing Cousin

By Kelly Hashway



Nikki cringed as her aunt's gray SUV pulled into the driveway. Her cousin Bella was coming to visit for three days, and Nikki was afraid Bella would embarrass her in front of her friends. Bella wasn't like most kids their age. She wore strange outfits that never matched, and she was always singing. But the worst part was that Bella didn't think she was different at all.

Nikki watched as Bella walked toward the front porch. She was already bobbing her head and singing some song about... sneakers? Who sang about sneakers?

"Hey, Nikki," Bella said, working the greeting into her song.

"Hi." Nikki had the sudden urge to pull Bella inside the house before any of the neighbors saw her, but it was too late. Mandy was already walking across the yard.

"Is this your cousin?" Mandy extended her hand to Bella. "I'm Mandy, Nikki's best friend."

Bella sang an old song Nikki's mom sometimes listened to. It was about a girl named Mandy. Nikki felt her cheeks burning with embarrassment.

"That's funny," Mandy said with a smile. "You want to go to the park and ride bikes?"

Nikki shook her head. "We can't. I have a lot planned. Maybe we can go in a few days."

"But I'll be gone in a few days," Bella sang.

"Then let's go now," Mandy said.

Bella nodded.

Nikki was outnumbered. "Okay, but only for a little while."

Bella borrowed Nikki's older sister's bike, and the three rode to the park. Bella sang the whole way. Each song was crazier than the next. She sang about everything from trees, to stop signs, to telephone poles.

Mandy slowed down to join Nikki who was lagging behind. "Your cousin is so funny. She can make up songs about anything."

"Yeah, sorry. I tried to warn you, but—"

"Warn me?" Mandy wrinkled her forehead. "Why? Bella's great."

"You think so?"

"Yeah." Mandy smiled. "Come on, let's sing along with her."

"How?" Nikki asked.

Bella stopped pedaling and joined them. "Easy. Think of a song you like and just change the words to whatever pops into your head. It's fun. I'm going to be a songwriter one day. Not silly songs like these. I just do this because it's fun."

Nikki thought about her favorite song as she looked at Bella, and before she knew it, she was singing about her crazy, fun cousin she was so glad was staying for a three-day visit.



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1. How did Nikki feel about her cousin at the beginning of this story?
 - a. She was afraid of her cousin.
 - b. She loved being around her cousin.
 - c. She was embarrassed of her cousin's behavior.
 - d. She believed her cousin was the best singer in the world.
2. How long was Bella planning to stay with Nikki?

3. In this story, Bella mostly sings...
 - a. along to songs on the radio
 - b. popular songs
 - c. about different things around her
 - d. love songs
4. What does Bella want to do when she grows up?

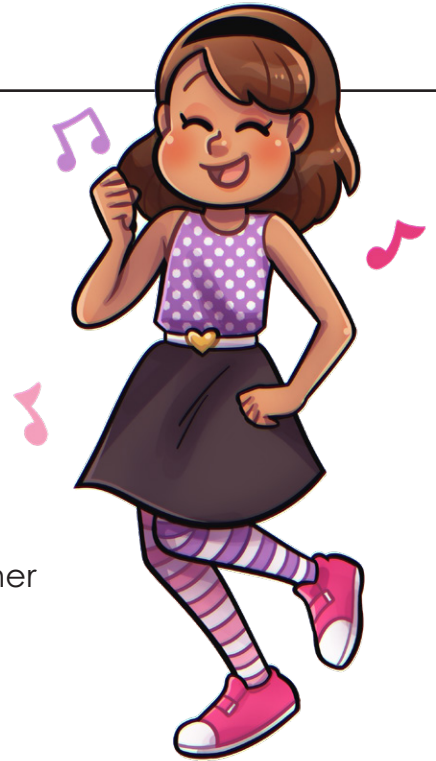
5. Besides her singing, what else does Nikki think is unusual about Bella?
 - a. She always has strange hair styles.
 - b. Her clothes never match.
 - c. She has an unusual voice.
 - d. She never stops dancing.
6. Which word best describes Bella?
 - a. bashful
 - b. introverted
 - c. outgoing
 - d. athletic

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Match each vocabulary word on the left with the definition on the right.



- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| 1. _____ embarrass | a. clothes worn together |
| 2. _____ outfits | b. falling behind |
| 3. _____ bobbing | c. your aunt or uncle's child |
| 4. _____ outnumbered | d. shoes for running, playing, walking, or sports; sometimes known as tennis shoes |
| 5. _____ telephone poles | e. to cause someone to feel awkward or ashamed |
| 6. _____ lagging | f. outvoted; situation in which more people favor one thing than another |
| 7. _____ sneakers | g. making quick, short movements up and down |
| 8. _____ cousin | h. tall, thin, wooden posts for holding up wires outdoors |

Now try this: Write a sentence using each of the vocabulary words above.

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In the story, “Singing Cousin,” Nikki’s cousin Bella is always singing. She sings made-up songs about things around her. In the story, she sang about trees, stop signs, telephone poles, and the people she was with.

In the space below, make up words to a song about an everyday object that is near you right now.

[illegible]

ANSWER KEY

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3 days

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She wants to be a songwriter.

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