



A House is not a Home Summary

In this story, Zan Gaudioso narrates his own story when he used to be a teenager. He joins a new high school and finds it difficult to adjust to the new place and make new friends. So, he feels lonely and isolated. He misses his old friends, teachers and of course the old school where he was leading a very comfortable student life. One Sunday afternoon, while his mother is stoking the fire to keep the house warm and comfortable, he suddenly notices smoke pouring in through the seams of the ceiling. Soon the smoke fills the room and flames begin to engulf the roof. Panic-stricken, the author and his mother make their way outside in great haste.

The author runs to the neighbor to call the fire brigade, while his mother rushes into the burning house to collect important documents and some photos of his late father. The author is terrorized to see his mother taking such a big risk and screams at her. In the meantime, the fire brigade arrives and his mother is saved. Suddenly he realises that his pet cat is missing. He has seen her nowhere. He falls into deep depression.

The fire fighters take five hours to put out the fire completely. The author's house is almost completely burned down. So, he goes to his grandparents' house with his mother. Next day, when he goes to school wearing the previous day's dress and borrowed shoes, he feels embarrassed. He is very sad and feels insecure. His old school, his friends, his house and his cat—all have gone away. After school that day, he comes to the place where his house once stood and is shocked to see the damage. Whatever hadn't burned was destroyed by water and chemicals the fire fighters used to put out the fire. He has lost everything except the photo albums, documents and some other personal items. And the loss of his pet cat makes him so uneasy.

The news of the fire spreads quickly in the author's new school. Everyone including the teachers is deeply grieved and comes to his help with books, clothes and school supplies. The author's heart moves from within to see all this. He is overcome by emotion. People who had never spoken to him before are coming up to him with some kind of help. In the process he is able to make friends and so is happy and relieved. A month later, the author is watching his house being rebuilt with his friends. Suddenly, a woman comes to him with his cat. His joy knows no bounds. He leaps up and grabs his pet out of the woman's arms. He holds her close to him and cries in happiness. His friends also hug the cat and jump around. It is a great day for the author. The feeling of loss and tragedy vanish at once. He feels grateful for his life, his friends and the kindness of the woman who brings his cat and his happiness back to him.

A House is not a Home Characters

The writer: The writer appears to be a teenager, who has just graduated from junior high. In the beginning of the story, she appears to have been a normal teenager, who was rude to her mother

and sometimes even hated her. She also appears to be emotional and finds it difficult to handle the shift to high school, away from the environment and people that she was used to. All her friends had gone to different high schools, and she felt very isolated and alone. She is very close to her pet cat, whom she had rescued as a kitten.

After the fire, she is initially very lost and sad, as she and her mother had just lost all their possessions and didn't even have any clothes or a place to stay. She is very shaken and insecure. However, she soon matures and grows closer to her mother. The shock of almost losing her mother in the fire makes her realise how much she loves her and she stops taking her for granted. The kindness of her new classmates and teachers, who donate all kinds of necessities to help her overcome her losses from the fire, touches her and makes her feel accepted and secure. She becomes less judgmental and more accommodating of the changes that take place in her life.

The mother: Her character emerges not through direct descriptions, but through her actions during the course of the story. She is very caring, responsible, and brave, bringing up her daughter as a single parent after her husband died several years ago. She faces each challenge and problem that arises without complaining. She never gives up, but always tries to find a solution to the problem. She is very concerned about her daughter, and even borrows clothes so that she can go to school the next day. She rebuilds her home from the debris. Even though her cards and identification papers are burnt, she does not hesitate to borrow money from her parents to make sure she can create a normal living situation for her daughter as quickly as possible. She is a caring and sensitive person, who loved her husband dearly even after he died. This is clear from the way she ran into the burning house to rescue his letters and pictures. She seems to have been a very remarkable woman who did not let life's challenges knock her down.

MCQ's

Question 1.

Where did the author and his mother have to borrow money?

- (a) grandparents
- (b) neighbours
- (c) bank
- (d) private financial institutions

Answer

Answer: (a) grandparents

Question 2.

What did the author borrow from his aunt to go to school?

- (a) tennis shoes
- (b) bag
- (c) uniform
- (d) books

Answer

Answer: (a) tennis shoes

Question 3.

On which day did the fire accident take Place?

- (a) Saturday
- (b) Sunday
- (c) Monday
- (d) Tuesday

Answer

Answer: (b) Sunday

Question 4.

Who did the author find missing after the fire accident?

- (a) his dog
- (b) his mother
- (c) his monkey
- (d) his cat

Answer

Answer: (d) his cat

Question 5.

What did the mother bring out of the burning house?

- (a) a metal box full of important documents
- (b) some pictures of the author's father
- (c) both (a) and (b)
- (d) none of the above

Answer

Answer: (c) both (a) and (b)

Question 6.

What does the author notice one Sunday afternoon?

- (a) smoke pouring in through the ceiling
- (b) water pouring in through the ceiling
- (c) wind breaking windows
- (d) all of the above

Answer

Answer: (a) smoke pouring in through the ceiling

Question 7.

Of which age group challenges does the story 'A House is Not a Home' reflect?

- (a) childhood
- (b) teenage
- (c) Youthful
- (d) old age

Answer

Answer: (b) teenage

Question 8.

Why did the author run to his neighbour's house?

- (a) to ask for help
- (b) to call the fire department
- (c) to get water
- (d) All

Answer

Answer: (b) to call the fire department

Question 9.

Why did the author cry after the fire?

- (a) because of smoke
- (b) because he was not able to find his cat
- (c) because smoke choked his throat
- (d) all

Answer

Answer: (b) because he was not able to find his cat

Question 10.

Which words tell that Zan was able to accept his new life and came out of his gloom?

- (a) "My cat was back and so was I"
- (b) I am happy
- (c) I got a new life
- (d) All

Answer

Answer: (a) "My cat was back and so was I"

Question 11.

What did the cat do to entertain herself?

- (a) jump on the bed
- (b) would hit Zan's pen with its tail
- (c) shout and cry meow
- (d) None

Answer

Answer: (b) would hit Zan's pen with its tail

Question 12.

Why did the author want to die?

- (a) because he was not happy
- (b) because his desires were not fulfilled

- (c) because he was not ready to face the harsh miserable life state after the fire
- (d) none

Answer

Answer: (c) because he was not ready to face the harsh miserable life state after the fire

Question 13.

Why was the author feeling shy in the school?

- (a) he was not wearing shoes
- (b) because he did not have his school bag and books
- (c) his dress was casual
- (d) All

Answer

Answer: (d) All

Question 14.

Who noticed the fire first?

- (a) Zan's friends
- (b) Zan's mother
- (c) Zan
- (d) zan's grandmother

Answer

Answer: (c) Zan

Question 15.

Why did the narrator feel strange in high school?

- (a) because he was fresh
- (b) all his friends went to other places
- (c) because he was all alone
- (d) All

Answer

Answer: (d) All

Question 16.

What is a home?

- (a) where people live together and share a bond of love and care
- (b) a house only
- (c) a property
- (d) None

Answer

Answer: (a) where people live together and share a bond of love and care

Question 17.

What is the story 'A House is not a Home' about?

- (a) defines a home
- (b) defines a house
- (c) None
- (d) differentiates between a house and a home

Answer

Answer: (c) None

Questions and Answers-

1. What does the author notice one Sunday afternoon? What is his mother's reaction? What does she do?

A. While he was doing his homework, Zan saw smoke coming in through the ceiling. The room was full of smoke in a few seconds. They rushed out of the house and saw that the roof was on fire. Zan's mother ran inside and rescued some documents. She went again to get his father's photographs and letters which were his only memories with them.

2. Why does he break down in tears after the fire?

A. Zan felt that everything was going the wrong way. He was in a new school, did not have his friends. Now, the fire snatched all his possessions, namely, his house, clothes, books and even his pet cat.

3. Why is the author deeply embarrassed the next day in school? Which words show his fear and insecurity?

A. The author was embarrassed because he did not have his shoes, his clothes were unusual. He did not have his school bag and books. The words showing his fear and insecurity are - I was totally embarrassed by everything. The clothes I was wearing looked weird, I had no books or homework, and my backpack was gone. I had my life in that backpack! The more I tried to fit in, the worse it got. Was I destined to be an outcast and a geek all my life? That's what it felt like. I didn't want to grow up, change or have to handle life if it was going to be this way. I just wanted to curl up and die.

4. The cat and the author are very fond of each other. How has this been shown in the story? Where was the cat after the fire? Who brings it back and how?

A. The cat and its master, Zan were attached to each other. Every morning Zan would disturb the cat and wake it. The cat would follow him, climb up his robe, sit in his pocket and sleep there. The cat would remain with Zan all the time. While he studied, it would hit its tail on his pen for entertainment.

5. What actions of the schoolmates change the author's understanding of life and people, and comfort him emotionally? How does his loneliness vanish and how does he start participating in life?

A. Zan's classmates were sympathetic and understood his situation. They arranged all necessities for him like clothes, books, stationary items. They invited him over to their place. All this comforted Zan. He came out of the negativity and made new friends. He realized that he was getting a new life.

6. What is the meaning of “My cat was back and so was I”? Had the author gone anywhere? Why does he say that he is also back?

A. “My cat was back and so was I” means that just like Zan got his cat back, similarly, he also got a new life. He came out of the gloom that had surrounded him. No, he had not gone anywhere. He says that he was back which implies that he got a new life which was full of affection and warmth.

Read the following extracts and answer the questions that follow in one or two lines each.

(A) She was never far from me. I had rescued her when she was a kitten, and somehow, she knew that I was the one responsible for giving her ‘the good life’.

1. Who is ‘I’ in these lines? Whom had he rescued?

Ans: ‘I’ in these lines is the author, Zan. He had rescued a red tabby cat when she was still a kitten.

2. Why was ‘she’ never far from the speaker?

Ans: She was never far from the speaker, Zan, because he loved her a lot and took good care of her. She was his pet and he tended to all her requirements for food, play and love. She, in turn, responded to his love and care with loyalty.

3. What does the speaker mean by ‘good life’?

Ans: ‘Good Life’, according to the speaker, Zan, means a life where the pet cat was fed well, pampered, and taken care of in every way.

4. How did ‘she’ know that the speaker was the one responsible for giving her ‘a good life’?

Ans: She, the red tabby cat, knew that Zan was responsible for giving her a good life because he was quite liberal with her. He allowed her to lie over his papers and punch at his pen while he did homework.

(B) He held on to me while other firefighters ran into the house. He knew that I wasn’t acting very logically and that if he were to let go, I’d run. He was right.

1. Who held on to whom and why?

Ans: One of the firefighters held on to Zan because he tried to run after his mother who was inside their burning house.

2. Why did the other firefighters run into the house?

Ans: The other firefighters ran into the house to rescue Zan’s mother.

3. ‘He was right’. Why?

Ans: ‘He’, the firefighter, was right because Zan would have certainly run into the burning house after his mother and would have thus endangered his life too if the firefighter had left him.

4. Which trait of the speaker do these lines highlight?

Ans: The speaker’s abundant love for his mother and his strong emotional dependence on her is highlighted here.

(C) Regardless, I had to go. We piled into the car with just the clothes on our backs and a few of the fireman’s blankets and made our way to my grandparents’ house to spend the night.

1. Who is the speaker? Where did he have to go and why?

Ans: The speaker is Zan and he had to go to his grandparent’s house since his house had been burnt down and was unsafe to stay in even after the firefighters had doused the fire.

2. Who does ‘we’ stand for?

Ans: “We” stands for Zan and his mother.

3. Why did they take ‘so few’ belongings with them?

Ans: They took so few belongings with them because everything they owned had got burnt down in the house.

4.” Regardless, I had to go”. Why does the speaker say this?

Ans: The speaker, Zan, says this because he had to go without knowing whether his cat was dead or alive. This was a crisis situation, and his priority was to ensure his and his mother’s safety and to start life fresh.

(IV) Everyone in the high school, including my teachers, was aware of my plight. I was embarrassed as if somehow, I were responsible. What a way to start off at a new school! This was not the kind of attention I was looking for.

1. Who is the speaker of these lines and what was his plight?

Ans: The speaker is Zan and his plight was that his house had been burnt down in the fire. All his belongings – his clothes, his books, his backpack – everything had been destroyed.

2. Why was he embarrassed?

Ans: He was embarrassed because he held himself responsible for his shabby appearance at school. He did not have a proper dress, shoes, or even backpack like other children.

3. Why was he uncomfortable about starting school in this manner?

Ans: He was uncomfortable about starting school in this manner because he thought he looked like a geek and an outcast without proper clothes, shoes and a backpack.

4. Why didn’t he want this kind of attention?

Ans: He had been ahead of his class in the previous school and was loved by his teachers for his grades. But now he was embarrassed as he had to attend school in awkward clothes and without notebooks or bag.

(V) There was a big table set up with all kinds of stuff on it, just for me. They had taken up a collection and bought me school supplies...

1. Who is the speaker and who are ‘they’ in these lines?

Ans: Zan is the speaker and ‘they’ are his new schoolmates.

2. Where was the big table?

Ans: The big table was in the school gym.

3. Why had the collection been taken up?

Ans: The collection had been taken up to help Zan after he had lost all his belongings in the fire that had burnt his house.

4. What was the speaker’s response to this gesture?

Ans: The speaker, Zan was overwhelmed by this gesture and felt as if the school supplies, notebooks, and different clothes kept on the table for him, were like Christmas gifts.

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. What is surreal? Why does the author feel that everything was surreal?

Ans: Surreal means something strange or unreal. The author felt that everything was surreal because too many unfortunate things had happened to him – his house was burnt down, his cat was lost, his mother was left with no money and he had no books, shoes, clothes and school uniform. His secure zone had been ripped away suddenly and the changes were too much and too many for him to handle.

2. In what condition does the author go to school after the fire incident?

Ans: After the fire incident, the author goes to school wearing the dress that he had worn to church on Sunday morning and the tennis shoes that he had borrowed from his aunt. His shoes, clothes, books, homework, and backpack had been destroyed in the fire.

3. Why did Zan's mother have to borrow money from his grandparents?

Ans: Zan's mother had to borrow money from his grandparents because her credit cards, cash and even identification that was needed to draw money from the bank had got burnt up in the fire. She had to rent a new place, buy new clothes for Zan and resettle quickly. She did not have time to wait for the recovery of her lost documents till then.

4. Why is the author deeply embarrassed the next day in school? Which words show his fear and insecurity?

Ans. The author was full of remorse as he was left with nothing. He didn't have a proper dress and study material. He had no backpack. He had a feeling of insecurity. All things appeared strange to him. He was shocked deeply and seemed frustrated. The words uttered by him "Was I destined to be an outcast and a geek all my life? I didn't want to grow up, change or have to handle life, if it was to going to be this way. I just wanted to curl up and die". These words reveal his fear and insecurity.

LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Describe the fire tragedy that struck Zan's house?

Ans: What was stoked to keep the house nice and warm, triggered a major fire break out that turned Zan's house to cinders and left him and his mother devastated. At first, Zan only smelled something strange but soon noticed smoke pouring in through the seams of the ceiling. The smoke filled the room quickly and Zan and his mother could barely see. Somehow, they groped their way to the front door and ran out into the front yard.

No sooner had they made their way outside than the whole roof was engulfed in flames, and the fire spread quickly. Zan ran to his neighbours to call the fire department and his mother ran back into the house and soon came out carrying a small metal box full of important documents. She rushed back into the house to retrieve his husband's pictures and letters – the only things she had to remember him by. Zan tried to run after her but was stopped by a fireman. The fire truck had already arrived and was busy dousing the fire. Some firefighters ran into the house and safely brought out Zan's mother and gave her an oxygen mask because she had inhaled smoke. It took five hours to finally put out the fire but the house was almost completely burnt and there was no sign of Zan's pet cat. Zan feared that she was burnt alive.

2. Describe the author's experience at school after the fire tragedy.

Ans. The author had just joined a new school. He was facing a big problem to make himself fit in the new school. Just after a couple of days his house caught fire. His school bag and shoes had burnt in a fire. The next day he went to school. He was around school like a wanderer. Everything appeared to him strange. He did not know what was going to happen to him. He returned home with a broken heart. He was experiencing terrible developments in his life.

The next day when he went to school; he found a strange atmosphere all around. People were getting together all around him. They had collected money for him and arranged school supplies and clothing for him. This changed his vision for life once again.

3. How is a Home different from a House? Explain with reference to the lesson 'A House Is Not a Home'.

Ans. Life without love is not life. Human relationship is based on love. The title itself indicates it clearly that a house is not a home without love. The author had to face adverse circumstances in his life. He was a fatherless boy. He led a satisfactory life with his old friends and teachers. But when he changed his school, he could not adjust himself in the new environment. He felt alienated. Later on, his house caught fire and he lost all the things including his cat. He started feeling dejected and isolated. Life had no interest in him anymore. He started building a new house. But it was not home, as a house is a home only when there are love and happiness. The author did not have any attachment to the new house. His reunion with his cat, his new friends and the new house made his house a home.