

“Two Leaves” from *Bambi, A Life in the Woods*

By Felix Salten

Directions: Read the short story. Answer the questions. Refer to the text to check your answers when appropriate.

The leaves were falling from the big oak tree at the edge of the meadow. They were falling from all the trees. One of the branches of the oak was much higher up than the others and it stretched a long way out over the meadow. At its tip there sat two leaves together.

“Things ain’t like they they used to be,” said one of the leaves.

“They ain’t,” the other answered. “There were so many of us last night who ... we’re just about the only ones left here on this branch.”

“You never know who it’s goin to ‘appen to next,” said the first. “Even when it was nice and warm and the sunshine gave you some heat you get a storm or a cloudburst sometimes, and lots of us got torn off then, even them that were still young. You never know who it’s goin to ‘appen to next.”

“You don’t get much sunshine these days,” the second leaf sighed, “and even when the sun does shine there’s no strength to it. You’ve got to get your strength from somewhere else.”

“Do you think it’s true,” pondered the first, “is it true that other leaves will come along and take our place once we’ve gone, and then another lot, and then another lot ...?”

“Course it’s true,” whispered the second, “only, we can’t work out how ... it’s above what we can understand, that is.”

“It’d make you really sad, and all,” the first added.

They remained silent for a while. Then the first said quietly to himself, “What do you have to go away for, anyway?”

The second asked, “What ‘appens to us after we’ve fallen?”

“We sink down ...”

“And what is it, what’s down there?”

The first answered, “I don’t know. Some say one thing, others say something different ... nobody knows, really.”

The second asked, “D’you think you feel anything, d’you think you know anything about yourself when you’re down there?”

The first answered, “Who can say? None of them who’ve gone down there has ever come back to tell us.”

They were again silent for a while. Then the first leaf said tenderly to the other, “Don’t get yourself all upset about it, here, you’re shivering, look.”

“Oh don’t bother about that,” the second answered, “anything makes me shiver these days. You just don’t feel properly attached to where you are, do you.”

“We’d better stop talking about things like that,” said the first leaf.

“Yeah, we’d better leave it,” the other replied. “Only ... what we going to talk about now then?”

They became silent, but after a short time resumed the subject. “Who d’you think’s going to be the first of us to go down there, then...?”

“It won’t be for a while yet,” the first reassured him. “Let’s just think about how beautiful it used to be, how wonderfully beautiful! When the sun came out and burned us so hot it seemed we’d just swell up with all the good health it gave us. Remember? And then there was the dew, early in the morning ... and the lime trees, wonderful nights ...”

“The nights are horrible now,” whined the second. “They never seem to come to an end.”

“We can’t complain,” said the first leaf gently, “we’ve lived longer than so many others.”

“Have I changed much?” the second leaf asked, shyly but emphatically.

“Not a bit,” the first assured him. “What, ‘cause I’ve gone all yellow and ugly? No, it’s gone a bit different for me ...”

“Oh, give over,” the second contradicted.

“No, honest,” the first repeated emphatically. “It’s true, what I’m telling you. You’re as lovely as you as you were on the very first day. Might be a few yellow stripes here and there, but not so’s you’d notice, but they just make you look all the lovelier. Honest!”

“Oh, stop it now,” said the first, and became silent himself. He could not talk any more because he was upset.

Now they were both silent. The hours passed. A damp wind blew cold and hostile through the tree tops.

“Oh ... now ...” said the second leaf, “... I ...” His voice broke off. He was gently removed from his place and fluttered down to the earth. - Winter had come.

“Two Leaves” | Reading Quiz

- Which best describes the **MOOD** of this story?
 - Cheerful
 - Bleak
 - Humorous
 - Optimistic
- Which figurative language technique is used to bring the main characters of this story to life?
 - Simile
 - Onomatopoeia
 - Personification
 - Hyperbole
- Which is **NOT** something that the leaves discuss?
 - How there used to be more leaves on the tree
 - How they don't know what happens after they fall
 - How the weather used to be brighter and warmer
 - How the squirrels walk on them inconsiderately
- How have things changed for the leaves?
 - It is darker, colder, and they are more miserable.
 - It is hot now and the heat makes them uncomfortable.
 - It is brighter and they are enjoying the warmth.
 - The weather hasn't changed much so they're bored.
- Which best characterizes the two leaves?
 - They still think that they have many warm days ahead of them so they are happy.
 - They know that they will fall soon and they are sad and concerned about it.
 - They think that it will be fun to get blown off the tree and they can't wait to go for the ride.
 - They are lonely at the top of the tree and excited to join their friends on the forest floor.
- From which perspective is this story narrated?
 - First-person
 - Third-person objective
 - Third-person omniscient
 - Third-person limited
- Why does the first leaf try to convince the second leaf that he hasn't changed much?
 - He is lying to try to make them both feel better.
 - He is trying to trick him from his spot.
 - He honestly can't tell that the second leaf has changed much.
 - He is trying to get him to share his acorn with him.
- Which figurative language technique is used in the following?
"Might be a few yellow stripes here and there, but not so's you'd notice,"
 - Simile
 - Metaphor
 - Hyperbole
 - Understatement
- Which statement best expresses the **THEME** of this story?
 - All good things must come to an end.
 - Keep your friends close and your enemies closer.
 - A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.
 - An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.
- If the story were to continue, it is reasonable to **PREDICT** that which would **MOST LIKELY** occur next?
 - The last leaf would hang on all winter and survive till the spring.
 - The last leaf would make a new leaf friend on the tree that he never noticed.
 - The last leaf would fall off also and in short time.
 - The last leaf would suddenly regain his strength and color.

Extended Response: Answer the following question in complete sentences on a separate sheet of paper.

What do the two leaves teach readers about companionship and having a friend?

Support your answer with evidence from the text and explain your argument completely.