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Tea for Two

by Joan Mosby

Before You Read

Before you read "Tea for Two," study the words below. Make sure you know what each word means. This will help you understand the story.

porch: an open place with a roof that is part of a house

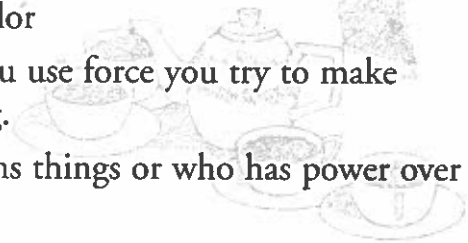
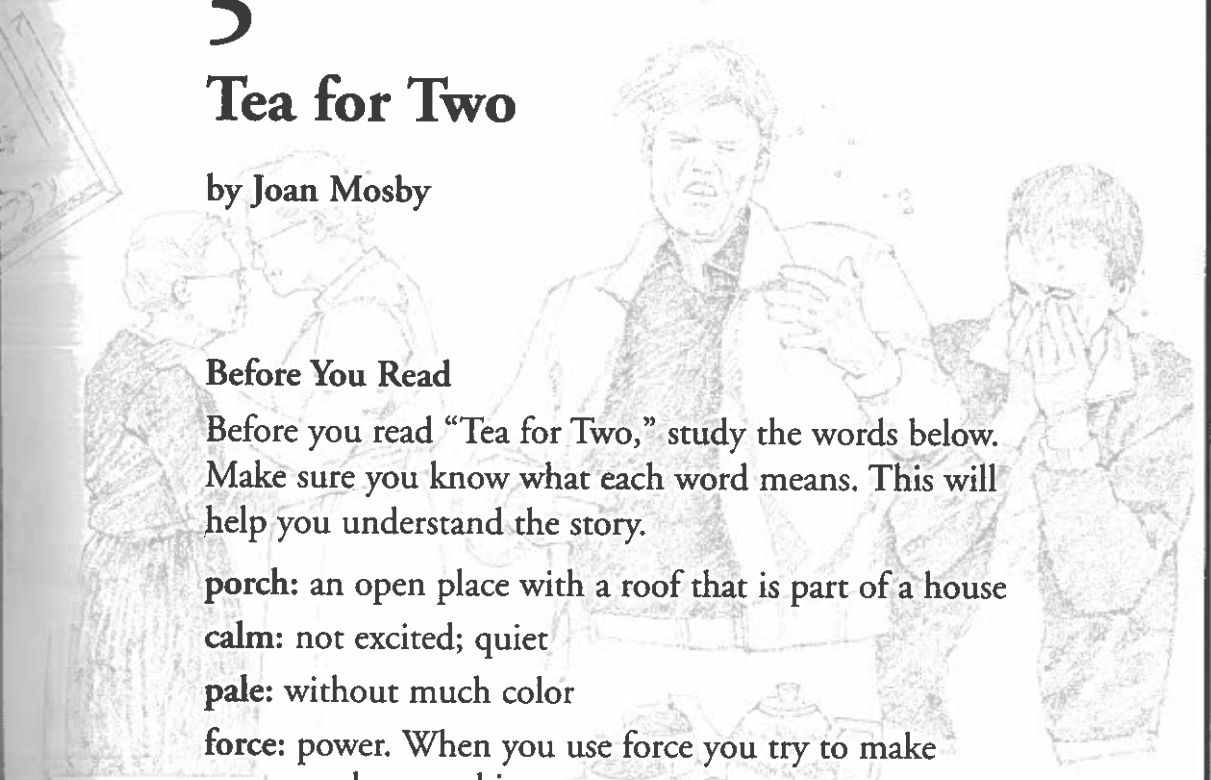
calm: not excited; quiet

pale: without much color

force: power. When you use force you try to make someone do something.

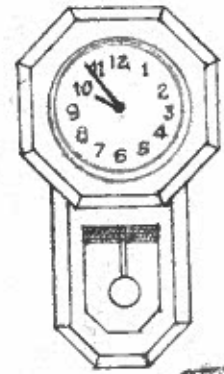
boss: someone who runs things or who has power over others

crashed: hit with a loud noise



Tea for Two

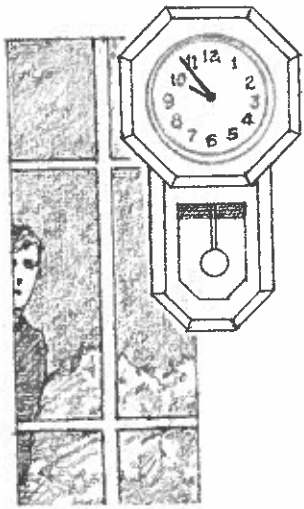
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Clara and Melissa were sisters. They lived alone. They lived in a big house. It was on the nicest street in town.

One evening their doorbell rang. It was nearly ten o'clock. Melissa was sure of that. She had glanced up at the clock on the wall.

Melissa looked at her sister. But Clara shook her head. The two sisters were surprised. The bell almost never rang at that hour. It was much too late. But the bell had rung last night. Now it was ringing again.



"Who could that be?" asked Melissa.

"I do not know," Clara said.

The bell rang again. Clara got up from her chair. She went to the door. Clara was tall and strong. She took long, powerful steps. Her sister, Melissa, was short and thin.

Clara turned on the porch light. Then she opened the door.

"Yes?" she asked.

Suddenly the door was thrown open. It knocked Clara back. A moment later two men were in the house.

One quickly closed the door. The other turned off the porch light.

One of the men looked out the window. "Do you see anyone?" the other man asked.

"No," said the first. "People don't stay up late in these little towns."

Clara looked at the two men. One was large and heavy. The other was short. He had a very round face.

Clara was sure she had seen them before. But she could not remember where.

"I must ask you to leave!" Clara said. "You must leave at once!"



"We will go in a little while," the large man said. "First we must take care of some business."

"I will call the police!" Clara said. She picked up the phone.

"I would not do that," said the large man. His voice was calm.

The other man came closer. Clara saw that he was holding a gun.

"You better listen to George," said the man with the gun. "Why don't we join your sister?"

Clara put down the phone. Then they all went into the living room.

Melissa was surprised. She looked at the men. "Oh!" she said. "I remember you. You came here last night. You are from the gas company. You said there was a leak. Is there still a problem?"

George smiled. "Yes," he said. "There is still a problem."

"Well! You spent enough time here last night!" Melissa said. "You looked all over this house. You looked from top to bottom. And my sister *told* you there was nothing wrong with the gas!"

Clara said, "Melissa, these men are not from the gas company. They are—I don't know what. Robbers, I guess. They came here last night. But they came to search our house."



"I am glad you understand," said George. "Freddy will not point the gun at you. He will keep it in his pocket. But he will have it ready. This is a business call. Do not forget that. Now, please sit down."

Clara sat down next to her sister. George seated himself.

"What do you want here?" Clara asked.

"Money, Miss Weston! Money." said George. "And we are going to get it! We know a lot about this house. We know a lot about you and your sister."

"What do you mean?"

"Your father was Charles Weston. He owned the Weston Lumber Company. He died years ago. You and Melissa got the company. You are the president. That is so, isn't it, Clara?"

Clara did not answer.

George smiled. "The two of you live alone in this house. You have lived here for years. You both have plenty of money. But you do not spend very much. You paint the place yourself. You fix things up."

"We know how to take care of ourselves," Clara said.

George laughed, "And you do not believe in banks. You and Melissa do not put your money in banks! You keep it here in the house!"

Clara suddenly turned pale. Melissa's thin hands shook a little.

It was true. Clara did not believe in banks. She had put some money in a bank. That was a long time ago. The bank had gone out of business. Clara got her money back.

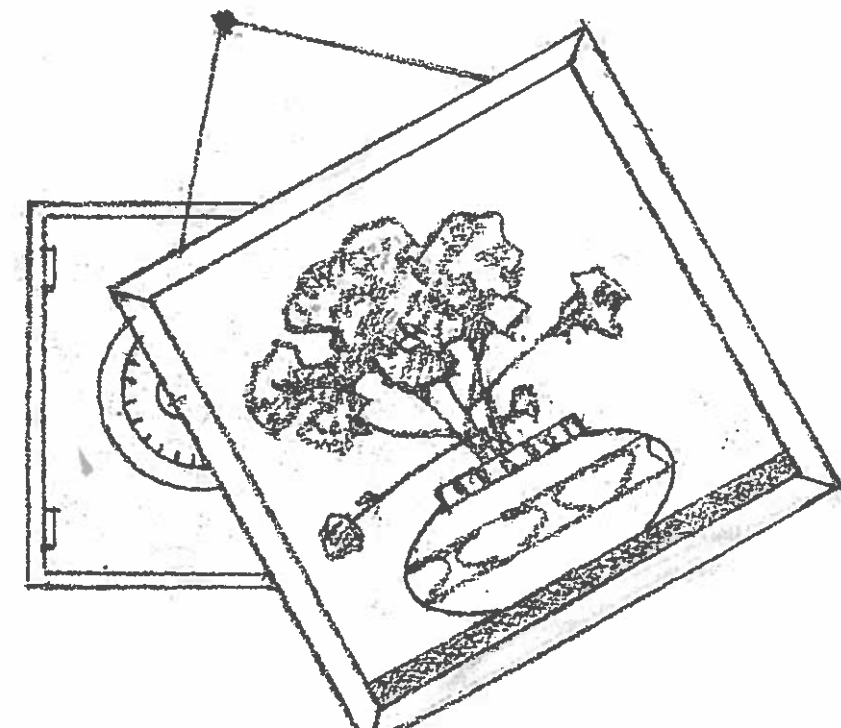
But it took a long time. Since then the sisters had never put their money in a bank. People in town knew that.

The large man said, "They call me Gentleman George. People do not get hurt when they do business with me. They just have to listen to me."

"But you are going to rob us!" said Clara.

Gentleman George said, "Please, think of this another way. My friend and I have already done some work here. We had to find out some things. That work took time. We must get paid for our work. We must get paid for our time."

Gentleman George said, "We spent time here last night. That was time well spent. We found out that you have a safe. The safe is in the wall. The safe is behind a painting. It is behind that painting over there."



"And you are going to open the safe," Clara said. "Why didn't you do that last night?"

"Ah," said Gentleman George, "Yesterday was Friday. Today is Saturday. We found out that Saturday is the company's busiest day. So today is better. There will be more money in the safe."

"Well," said Clara. "What are you waiting for? Open the safe."

"I cannot," said Gentleman George. "I do not know the numbers that open the safe. But one of you will open it for me. You both know the right numbers."

"What if we won't?" said Clara.

Gentleman George said, "I believe that you will. We are not in a hurry. I don't want to use force. I don't want to do that. But if we have to . . ."

Clara spoke again. Her voice was hard. She said, "We will *not* open the safe!"

"Maybe not," said Gentleman George. "Maybe not *we*. But *one* of you will. Melissa might. She might do that to keep us from hurting you."

Gentleman George looked at the gun. It was in Freddy's hand. Melissa began to sob softly. Clara put an arm around her sister.

"How very sweet," said Gentleman George. "The strong and the weak. The lion and the lamb."



Clara stared at Gentleman George. There was anger in her eyes.

He said, "You can learn a lot by watching people. I can see that Clara is the boss. Melissa does what Clara says. Clara is strong. Melissa is weak."

Melissa put a handkerchief up to her eyes. Then she looked at the clock.

"Are you expecting someone?" asked Gentleman George.

"No," said Melissa. "But it is ten o'clock. I always make tea at ten o'clock. I do that every night."



Gentleman George said, "Tea every night at ten o'clock. Well, well, well! Each day is just like every other. You work at the office. You put the money in the safe. You have tea at night. Nothing ever changes."

"I suppose it is a little silly," Melissa said softly.

"Oh, no. Not at all," said Gentleman George. "Let us all have tea. That may help you make up your mind about who will open the safe."

Gentleman George got up. He moved to the table. Melissa went to get a teapot.

"Freddy," said Gentleman George. "Go along with Melissa. See that she sticks to making tea. I will stay here with Clara."

Soon Melissa came back. She was carrying a tray. On it was a large, old teapot. There were also four cups.

Melissa put the four cups on the table. She filled Clara's cup with tea. She filled a cup for Gentleman George. Then she filled her own.

Freddy sat down. Melissa began to fill his cup. Suddenly she swung the teapot. It crashed against Freddy's head. Pieces of glass flew into the air. Freddy dropped to the floor.

Gentleman George jumped up from his chair. But he did not take a step. Hot tea from Clara's cup splashed in his face.

He grabbed at his eyes. "I can't see!" he yelled.

When he could open his eyes, he was looking at Freddy's gun. It was in Melissa's hand.

Melissa turned to her sister, "Call the police," she said.

"Whatever you say," Clara answered. "You are the boss."

Clara moved toward the phone. Then she stopped. She said, "It is too bad about the teapot. It broke into a hundred pieces."

Melissa smiled. "Well," she said, "it doesn't matter that much. We only used it for company. You know how we both hate tea!"



TELL ABOUT THE STORY.

Put an *x* in the box next to the right answer. Each sentence tells a *fact* about the story.

- The men came to the house to
 a. have tea with the sisters.
 b. fix something that was broken.
 c. take money from the safe.
- Clara and Melissa did not
 a. live alone.
 b. believe in banks.
 c. paint the house themselves.
- Melissa hit Freddy with
 a. the gun.
 b. the teapot.
 c. a chair.
- Gentleman George could not see because
 a. Clara threw tea in his face.
 b. he dropped his glasses.
 c. it was dark in the house.

ADD WORDS TO SENTENCES.

Complete the sentences below. Fill in each blank with one of the words in the box. Each word can be found in the story. There are five words and four blanks. This means that one word in the box will not be used.

Every day, _____¹ all over the world drink tea. In England _____² everyone stops to have afternoon tea. More _____³ is used there than in any other place. Most people buy more than ten pounds of tea every _____⁴.

tea laughed
 year
people almost

NUMBER
CORRECT

x 5 =

YOUR
SCORE

NUMBER
CORRECT

x 5 =

YOUR
SCORE

LEARN NEW WORDS.

The vocabulary words are printed in **dark type** in the story. You may look back at the words before you answer these questions. Put an *x* in the box next to the right answer.

1. Melissa glanced at the clock on the wall. The word *glanced* means
 a. fixed.
 b. looked.
 c. bought.
2. The men came to search the house. The word *search* means
 a. to talk about.
 b. to look through.
 c. to break into pieces.
3. Clara and Melissa had plenty of money. The word *plenty* means
 a. a lot of.
 b. some.
 c. none.
4. Melissa began to sob, so Clara put an arm around her sister. The word *sob* means to
 a. fight.
 b. shout.
 c. cry.

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NUMBER CORRECT		YOUR SCORE

EXPLAIN WHAT HAPPENED.

Here is how to answer these questions. First think about what happened in the story. Then *figure out* (work out) the right answer. This is called *critical thinking*.

1. We may infer (figure out) that
 a. the sisters were poor.
 b. George got away.
 c. nothing was wrong with the gas.
2. Which sentence is true?
 a. Clara did not know how to open the safe.
 b. The sisters liked tea.
 c. The sisters did not drink tea every night.
3. George said that Clara and Melissa were "the lion and the lamb." He was saying that
 a. both sisters were weak.
 b. Clara was strong and Melissa was weak.
 c. they did not like him.
4. It is fair to say that the sisters
 a. tricked the men.
 b. were too scared to think.
 c. had no money in the safe.

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NUMBER CORRECT		YOUR SCORE

SPOT STORY ELEMENTS.

Some story elements are **plot**, **character**, and **setting**. (See page 3.) Put an *x* in the box next to the right answer.

1. What happened first in the *plot*?
 a. Melissa told Clara to call the police.
 b. Two men pushed open the door.
 c. Melissa came into the room with a teapot and cups.
2. Which sentence best *characterizes* (tells about) Clara?
 a. She was tall and looked strong.
 b. She was short and thin.
 c. She was small and had a very round face.
3. Where is the story *set*?
 a. in a store
 b. in an office
 c. in a big house
4. When is the story *set*?
 a. in the morning
 b. around noon
 c. about ten o'clock at night

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THINK SOME MORE ABOUT THE STORY.

Your teacher might want you to write your answers.

- Gentleman George said that Clara was the boss. Why did he believe that? Was he right? Explain.
- Do you think that Melissa really was crying—or was she pretending? Explain.
- Clara told the men, "We know how to take care of ourselves." Show how that was true.

Write your scores in the boxes below. Then write your scores on pages 138 and 139.

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+		
<input type="text"/>	A	DD WORDS TO SENTENCES
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