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The Legend of Whispering Willow

In a quaint village nestled between rolling hills and ancient forests, there lived a young girl named Elana. She had eyes as bright as the morning sun and a heart as wild as the wind. But what set Elana apart was her gift—the ability to hear the whispers of the willow trees. You see, these willows were no ordinary trees. They stood tall and wise, their branches swaying like old storytellers. When the moon hung low in the sky, they would murmur secrets—tales of forgotten kingdoms, lost treasures, and magical creatures that danced under the silver light. Elana loved to sit beneath the grand willow near the village square. Its gnarled roots formed cozy nooks, perfect for a curious girl with an insatiable appetite for stories. And so, every evening, she would settle there, her legs dangling over the edge, and listen. One night, as the stars blinked into existence, the willow whispered, “Elana, child of wonder, seek the golden key.” Elana’s heart skipped a beat. The golden key? What could it unlock? She asked the willow, but it only rustled its leaves, leaving her with more questions than answers. Determined, Elana embarked on her quest. She followed the moon’s path, through dew-kissed meadows and shadowy forests. Along the way, she met peculiar companions—a chatty squirrel named Nutkin, a mischievous firefly named Lumina, and a wise old owl named Hoot. Nutkin chattered about hidden tunnels and secret passages, while Lumina guided her with her glowing tail. Hoot shared riddles and ancient rhymes, leading Elana deeper into the heart of the forest. Finally, they reached the Whispering Falls—a cascade of silver water that shimmered like stardust. There, beneath a moss-covered rock, Elana found the golden key. It was delicate, its edges etched with symbols she couldn’t decipher. “Unlock the door of dreams,” whispered the falls. Elana’s mind raced. Dreams? Could the key open a portal to other worlds? She held it tightly, her pulse echoing its mystery. Back in the village, Elana stood before an ancient oak—the oldest tree of all. Its bark bore scars from battles long past, and its roots delved deep into the earth. With trembling hands, she inserted the golden key into a hidden keyhole. The oak quivered, its branches stretching toward the sky. The air hummed with magic. And then, with a soft creak, the tree split open, revealing a swirling vortex—a doorway to realms beyond imagination. Elana stepped through, leaving behind Nutkin, Lumina, and Hoot. She found herself in a land of floating islands, where dragons rode clouds and mermaids sang lullabies to the moon. Elana danced with fairies, tasted starfruit, and laughed until her sides ached. But as the days passed, she missed her village—the smell of freshly baked bread, the warmth of her grandmother’s embrace. So, with a heavy heart, she returned, the golden key now a pendant around her neck. The willow welcomed her home, its leaves whispering, “You carry the magic of worlds within you, Elana.” And so, the legend of Whispering Willow spread. Elana became the keeper of stories, sharing her adventures with wide-eyed children. And every night, as the moon rose, she would sit beneath the grand willow, listening to its murmurs, knowing that magic awaited those who dared to listen.

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Answer according to the reading passage:

- 1. What is the name of the majestic tree in the enchanted forest?**
 - a. Whispering Willow
 - b. Glittering Birch
 - c. Ancient Oak

- 2. What was the chatty squirrel's name?**
 - a. Lumina
 - b. Nutkin
 - c. Hoot

- 3. What did Elana become the keeper of?**
 - a. stories
 - b. magic of worlds
 - c. Nutkin

- 4. Where did Elana find herself after using the key and opening the door?**
 - a. land of floating islands
 - b. in the clouds
 - c. in the treehouse

- 5. What did Elana miss from her village that made her want to return?**
 - a. freshly baked bread
 - b. grammas embrace
 - c. both of above

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Open Response Questions

Open response questions for thinking skills:

1. Inferring
2. Making Connections
3. Summarizing
4. Visualizing

1. What makes this story a legend?
 2. If you were in Elana's shoes, would you have made the same choice? Why or why not?
 3. Re-write this reading passage in 5 sentences.
 4. Describe what Elana saw when she went through the door?
- Do you enjoy reading legend type reading passages? Why or why not?
 - What unique gift did Elana possess, and how did it set her apart from others in the village?
 - What happens in this reading passage that makes you realize it couldn't be real/true?
 - What does this reading passage remind you of?
 - What would you do if you had the same gifts that Elana had? How would you use them?