Year 4 reading comprehension: The Echidna and the Fox

English · Reading comprehension
Level: Hard

Student: _____ Date: _____

Instructions
- Read the text first. There are 3 questions. Read each one carefully.
- Circle the best answer. Look back at the text to find the words that tell you.
- A grown-up can read the text aloud — that's fine.
- The answers are at the end. Check them together when you have finished.

Questions

Read this, then answer questions 1–3.

The Echidna and the Fox

An echidna was snuffling for ants by the track,
When a red fox came trotting, the sun on his back.
'Dear friend,' he purred softly, a smile on his face,
'Why sit in the dust? Come and see my nice place.
There's shade by the creek, and the ants there are sweet.
Just follow, I'll lead you, and we'll have a treat.'
The echidna said nothing. She dug herself down
Till only her spines showed above the red ground.
The fox sniffed and circled. He pawed at a spine.
'Ow!' he yelped. 'Very well. I've no wish to dine.'
He slunk off at last, and the echidna stayed
Safe down in her hollow till daylight would fade.
So when a smooth stranger says, 'Trust me, come too,'
Stay safe where you are – as the echidna knew.

1. Which well-known saying best fits the poem's moral?

Circle one answer.

- ○ **A** Better safe than sorry.
- ○ **B** Every cloud has a silver lining.
- ○ **C** Strike while the iron is hot.
- ○ **D** A friend in need is a friend indeed.

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2. The writer wants readers to think the echidna was

Circle one answer.

- ○ **A** lucky that the fox had no wish to dine
- ○ **B** silly to miss the sweet ants by the creek
- ○ **C** wise to stay hidden and say nothing
- ○ **D** rude not to answer the fox

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3. Which line states the moral of the poem?

Circle one answer.

- ○ **A** Till only her spines showed above the red ground.
- ○ **B** Stay safe where you are – as the echidna knew.
- ○ **C** He slunk off at last, and the echidna stayed
- ○ **D** Just follow, I'll lead you, and we'll have a treat.

Answer key

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1. A — Better safe than sorry.

The echidna 'dug herself down' instead of following the fox, and the poem ends 'Stay safe where you are'. 'A friend in need' only shares the fox's word 'friend'.

2. C — wise to stay hidden and say nothing

The poem ends, 'Stay safe where you are – as the echidna knew.' The writer holds her up as wise. The sweet ants and 'no wish to dine' are only the fox's words.

3. B — Stay safe where you are – as the echidna knew.

'Stay safe where you are' tells the reader how to act. The other lines describe events, or are the fox's tricky words.