Have you ever heard people whistling or humming while they are doing something? You might have even found yourself doing this on occasion. Most of the time, whistling or humming means that a person is happy. The songs or tunes that people whistle or hum reflect a happy mood. You probably know how to read the moods of the people with whom you live just by watching them. If your mother or grandmother sings while she bakes, you might get to taste the cookies before they are cool. If the cook is slamming the pots, you know to stay out of the way!

Stories can also have a mood. You can identify those moods by the words the author uses. If the author describes the main character walking under the trees with the sun shining through the leaves overhead, the rustle of bunnies hopping happily under the bushes beside the path, and pretty little birds singing in the branches, this creates a happy mood. If, on the other hand, it is dark under those trees, with eerie slithering noises off to the side, and the strange shadows deepening in the gloom, the mood will be scary, not happy. Authors use words to create word pictures and set the mood for the story they want to tell.

In the first chapter of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, L. Frank Baum wants to create a scene that is very flat and boring.

When Dorothy stood in the doorway and looked around, she could see nothing but the great gray prairie on every side. Not a tree nor a house broke the broad sweep of flat country that reached to the edge of the sky in all directions. The sun had baked the plowed land into a gray mass, with little cracks running through it. Even the grass was not green, for the sun had burned the tops of the long blades until they were the same gray color to be seen everywhere. Once the house had been painted, but the sun blistered the paint and the rains washed it away, and now the house was as dull and gray as everything else.

Everything in Dorothy’s world is gray. How does all that gray make you feel? Do you think Dorothy is happy when all she can see is gray? Baum does not have to describe how Dorothy feels. His description of her surroundings does it for him. After the cyclone takes her to Oz, she comes out of her house, and this is what she sees.

The cyclone had set the house down very gently—for a cyclone—in the midst of a country of marvelous beauty. There were lovely patches of greensward all about, with stately trees bearing rich and luscious fruits. Banks of gorgeous flowers were on every hand, and birds with rare and brilliant plumage sang and fluttered in the trees and bushes. A little way off was a small brook, rushing and sparkling along between green banks, and murmuring in a voice very grateful to a little girl who had lived so long on the dry, gray prairies.

You can immediately see the change in mood. Before, everything was gray. Now, everything Dorothy sees is brightly colored and brimming with life. By changing the way he describes the setting, Baum creates a very different mood. Authors often use changes in mood to show where there is a change in the action in the story.
Choose which word best describes the mood created by the author’s description.

1. The four young faces on which the firelight shone brightened at the cheerful words, but darkened again as Jo said sadly, “We haven’t got Father, and shall not have him for a long time.” She didn’t say “perhaps never,” but each silently added it, thinking of Father far away, where the fighting was. (Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women*)
   a. happy
   b. sad
   c. scary
   d. mysterious

2. Nobody in Pleasant Valley ever paid any attention to Freddie Firefly in the daytime. But on warm, and especially on dark summer nights he always appeared at his best. Then he went gaily flitting through the meadows. Sometimes he even danced right in Farmer Green’s dooryard, together with a hundred or two of his nearest relations. (Arthur Scott Bailey, *The Tale of Freddie Firefly*)
   a. happy
   b. sad
   c. scary
   d. mysterious

3. She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which some one was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves. (Kate Chopin, *The Story of an Hour*)
   a. happy
   b. sad
   c. scary
   d. mysterious

4. She found herself in a long, low hall, which was lit up by a row of lamps hanging from the roof. There were doors all round the hall, but they were all locked; and when Alice had been all the way down one side and up the other, trying every door, she walked sadly down the middle, wondering how she was ever to get out again. (Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*)
   a. happy
   b. sad
   c. scary
   d. mysterious

5. His rooms were brilliantly lit, and, even as I looked up, I saw his tall, spare figure pass twice in a dark silhouette against the blind. He was pacing the room swiftly, eagerly, with his head sunk upon his chest and his hands clasped behind him. To me, who knew his every mood and habit, his attitude and manner told their own story. He was at work again. (Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, A Scandal in Bohemia*)
   a. happy
   b. sad
   c. scary
   d. mysterious

Continued
6. Just as I was passing a place where a kind of a cowpath crossed the crick, here comes a
couple of men tearing up the path as tight as they could foot it (as fast as they could run).
I thought I was a goner, for whenever anybody was after anybody I judged it was ME—or
maybe Jim. (Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*)
   a. happy
   b. sad
   c. scary
   d. mysterious

7. The door, which was equipped with neither bell nor knocker, was blistered and distained.
   Tramps slouched into the recess and struck matches on the panels; children kept shop
   upon the steps; the schoolboy had tried his knife on the moldings; and for close on a gen-
   eration, no one had appeared to drive away these random visitors or to repair their rav-
   ages (damage). (Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*)
   a. happy
   b. sad
   c. scary
   d. mysterious

8. The friendly cow all red and white,
   I love with all my heart:
   She gives me cream with all her might,
   To eat with apple-tart.
   a. happy
   b. sad
   c. scary
   d. mysterious

9. Saturday morning was come, and all the summer world was bright and fresh, and brim-
   ming with life. There was a song in every heart; and if the heart was young the music
   issued at the lips. (Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*)
   a. happy
   b. sad
   c. scary
   d. mysterious

10. There was no possibility of taking a walk that day. We had been wandering, indeed, in the
    leafless shrubbery an hour in the morning; but since dinner (Mr. Reed, when there was no
    company, dined early) the cold winter wind had brought with it clouds so somber, and a
    rain so penetrating, that further out-door exercise was now out of the question. (Charlotte
    Bronte, *Jane Eyre*)
    a. happy
    b. sad
    c. scary
    d. mysterious