

Practice Exercise **12**

Ma went to the meat counter, her forefinger pressed against her lips, blowing on her finger, thinking deeply.

"Might get some pork chops," she said. "How much?"

"Thirty cents a pound, ma'am."

"Well, lemme have three poun's. An' a nice piece a boilin' beef. My girl can cook it tomorra."

Pa came close, carrying a can of syrup in his hands.

"Might get this here," he said. "Might have some hotcakes."

Ma frowned, "Well—well, yes. Here, we'll take this here. Now—we got plenty lard."

Ruthie came near, in her hands two large boxes of Cracker Jack, in her eyes a brooding question, which on a nod or a shake of Ma's head might become tragedy or joyous excitement. "Ma?" She held up the boxes, jerked them up and down to make them attractive.

"Now you put them back—"

The tragedy began to form in Ruthie's eyes. Pa said, "They're on'y a nickel apiece. Them little fellas worked good today."

"Well—" The excitement began to steal into Ruthie's eyes. "Awright."

Ruthie turned and fled. Halfway to the door she caught Winfield and rushed him out the door, into the evening.

1. Ruthie is
 - a. cruel.
 - b. cunning.
 - c. selfish.
 - d. nervous.
2. Ma is
 - a. gullible and foolish.
 - b. inflexible and determined.
 - c. firm but loving.
 - d. inflexible and bossy.
3. Pa is
 - a. understanding.
 - b. stubborn.
 - c. confused.
 - d. reckless.
4. Underline the sentence that shows that Ruthie understands which of her parents makes the decisions for the family.