

Name _____

Chain Reaction



Jan Brett's *The Mitten* is a perfect example of how one small action can lead to a series of unexpected events. The story follows a young boy named Nicki, who begs his grandmother to knit him white mittens. She warns him that white mittens might be hard to find in the snow, but she agrees to make them. When Nicki goes outside to play, he loses one mitten in the snow without noticing. This small event sets off a chain reaction that changes the story's course.

As the mitten lies on the snowy ground, a shivering mole discovers it and crawls inside for warmth. Soon, a rabbit sees the mitten and, noticing the mole inside, squeezes in as well. This pattern continues as larger and larger animals—like a hedgehog, an owl, a badger, and even a fox—decide to make the mitten their cozy home. Each new arrival pushes the mitten's fabric to its limit, but the mitten somehow continues to stretch. The cause-and-effect pattern is clear: because Nicki dropped his mitten, the mole found it; because the mole found it, the rabbit joined in, and so on.

The biggest surprise happens when a bear, the largest animal yet, crawls inside. By now, the mitten is comically stretched, barely able to contain all the animals. But instead of the mitten tearing apart, the final event in the chain happens—one tiny mouse lands on the bear's nose. The tickling sensation causes the bear to sneeze, and with one powerful blow, all the animals are thrown from the mitten and sent flying into the snow. The mitten, now empty, drifts through the air and lands near Nicki, who picks it up just in time. He has no idea about the adventure his mitten just went through!

This story is an excellent example of how cause and effect shape events. Each action—losing the mitten, animals entering it, and the bear sneezing—directly influences what happens next. Without these small events leading into one another, the story wouldn't unfold in the same exciting way. Jan Brett's clever storytelling reminds us that even the smallest action, like losing a mitten, can lead to surprising and sometimes hilarious consequences.