

Coraline, by Neil Gaiman
Vocabulary

distorted

flyblown

rockery

toadstool

protective coloration

garnish

parlor

knickknacks

deferential

anteroom

unicycle

nefarious

fiendish

tetanus

sarcastic

trivialities

britches

peradventure

petulantly

derelict

plasticine

miser

acid

vigorously

pell-mell

ululating

momentum

dilapidated

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Short Answer Questions, 1

1. Who were Miss Spink and Miss Forcible?
2. Why couldn't Coraline see the mouse circus that the man with the big mustache was training?
3. What did Coraline do for the first two weeks in the new house?
4. What kind of jobs did Coraline's parents have?
5. What did Coraline's father suggest she should do on the day it was raining and she couldn't go out?
6. What message did the crazy old man's mice had for Coraline the day after the rain?
7. What did Miss Spink and Miss Forcible see when they read Coraline's tea leaves?
8. What did Coraline get from Miss Spink and Miss Forcible to help her against bad things?
9. What happened when Coraline opened the old door with the old key when her mother was out?
10. How did Coraline's other mother differ in appearance from her real mother?
11. What was different about the black cat on the other side of the old door?
12. What did Coraline find when she visited the flat of the other Miss Spink and Miss Forcible?
13. How did the other Miss Spink and Miss Forcible differ from the ladies that Coraline had known?
14. What did Coraline's other parents want her to do, in order to stay with them forever and always?
15. What had happened to Coraline's parents while she was gone?
16. Who showed Coraline what had happened to her parents?
17. What did the police think when Coraline tried to call for help?
18. What reason did the other mother give Coraline for her real father and mother being gone?
19. What advice did the cat give Coraline when it came to handling the situation with the other mother?
20. What did Coraline learn from her other father when she found him alone in his study?

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Short Answer Questions, 2

21. What happened when Coraline went exploring the wood on the “other side”?
22. What role did the rats play in the other mother's world?
23. What did Coraline's other mother eat?
24. Why did the other mother lock Coraline away for a while?
25. What did Coraline find when she was locked away in the broom closet?
26. What did the dead children want Coraline to do for them?
27. What kind of game did Coraline and the other mother decide to play?
28. How was Coraline able to locate the souls of the dead children?
29. How did the other mother try to cheat in the game between her and Coraline?
30. Who helped Coraline to get the last of the ghost children's souls from the rats?
31. Where had the other mother hidden Coraline's parents?
32. Why did the cat become upset as the other mother's world changed and became flat?
33. What did Coraline realize when she finally confronted the other mother at the end of the game?
34. How did Coraline trick the other mother into opening the door out of her world?
35. What did Coraline dream the night she was back home and safe?
36. What did the ghost children warn Coraline about in her dream?
37. What did the other mother's right hand want?
38. What did Coraline mean when she said that her dolls were “protective coloration”?
39. How did Coraline get rid of the other mother's right hand in the end?

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Long Answer Questions

1. What was so special about the big wooden door that was locked?
2. What impression did you get from Coraline's relationship with her parents when she was home from school? How did Coraline's parents act when she came to them?
3. What do you think that Coraline meant when she thought that Miss Spink and Miss Forcible were having “an argument as old and comfortable as an armchair”?
4. Why do you think Coraline and her mother had such different opinions when it came to buying clothes for Coraline?
5. Why do you think that Coraline liked the lunch she ate with her other parents much better than anything she had eaten at home?
6. Why do you think that Coraline's other home was much more interesting to her than her regular home?
7. Describe what kind of emotions you think Coraline went through when she realized that her parents were missing.
8. Why do you think Coraline told the cat the story about how her father had saved her from the wasps, just before they went to rescue her parents on the other side of the door?
9. Coraline liked to think of herself as an explorer. Do you agree that she was? If so, give examples of why. If not, give examples of how Coraline was not an explorer.
10. On several occasions, Coraline asked the cat what kind of creature her other mother was, but she never got an answer. What do you think?
11. Explain why the “beldam”(the other mother) might have abducted the children.
12. Many of the people the other mother created started to look less good after a while. Why do you think that happened?
13. Coraline did believe the other mother when she said that she loved Coraline, but what kind of love did it turn out to be?
14. Explain why Coraline thought that the creature that used to be her other father was both monstrous and miserable.
15. When Coraline talked to the copy of the crazy old man, she tried to explain to him why it wasn't a good thing to get everything that you ever wanted. Do you agree or disagree? Why?
16. Coraline thought that the other mother couldn't create anything, just twist and transform things. Explain what she meant by that.
17. In what ways did the other mother's appearance change throughout the story, so that she became less and less like Coraline's real mother?
18. Coraline's parents did not remember their captivity. Were there any signs that they were aware that Coraline had saved them?

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ANSWERS

Vocabulary

Possible vocabulary exercises: find definitions in a dictionary; define in their own words; locate the words in the text and re-write them; use their own sentences to show the meaning in context. Below are sample definitions.

distorted – misrepresented, twisted, misshaped

flyblown – contaminated with flyblow larvae (in meat), tainted corrupt, run down

rockery - a garden in which rocks are arranged and plants cultivated in a carefully designed, decorative scheme or a rocky area in which plants particularly adapted to such terrain are cultivated.

toadstool - any of various mushrooms having a stalk with an umbrella-like cap, often however, referring to poisonous mushrooms.

protective coloration - coloration making an organism less visible or attractive to predators.

garnish – decorate, adorn, provide with something that adds flavor or color.

parlor - a room for the reception and entertainment of visitors to one's home; living room.

knickknacks – small ornamental things, trinkets

deferential – showing deference, respectful

anteroom – a room that admits to a larger room, a waiting room

unicycle - a vehicle with one wheel, esp. a pedal-driven device kept upright and steered by body balance, commonly used by acrobats and other performers.

nefarious – extremely wicked, villainous.

fiendish – extremely wicked, bad, cruel or disagreeable

tetanus - an acute, often fatal disease that is characterized by spasmodic contraction of voluntary muscles, especially one occurring in the neck and jaw, and that is caused by the neurotoxin *clostridium tetani*, which typically infects the body through a deep wound. also called *lockjaw*.

sarcastic – ironical, using cutting remarks to wound someone.

trivialities – things of very small importance, insignificant or common things.

britches – another form of the word breeches; knee-length trousers, often having ornamental buckles or elaborate decoration at or near the bottoms, commonly worn by men and boys in the 17th, 18th, and early 19th centuries.

peradventure – maybe, possibly, perhaps

petulantly – ill tempered, irritably, testily

derelict - left, abandoned, deserted

plasticine - a synthetic material resembling clay but remaining soft; used as a substitute for clay or wax in modeling (especially in schools).

miser - a person who lives in wretched circumstances in order to save and hoard money, a stingy or greedy person.

acrid – sharp, harsh, bitter

vigorously – energetically, powerfully, forcefully

pell-mell – in an indiscriminate, disorderly, confused or overly hasty manner.

ululating – howling, wailing, lamenting

momentum – the rate of acceleration, the force of speed

dilapidated - having fallen into a state of disrepair or deterioration, as through neglect; broken-down and shabby.

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Questions

For the short answer questions, students may answer questions briefly on the page or at greater length on their own paper or in writing journals. For the essay questions, we suggest a writing journal where students could record answers as they read. Alternatively, a limited number of questions could be assigned to each student. The essay questions can also be used as discussion questions.

1. Miss Spink and Miss Forcible were former actresses who were Coraline's neighbors.
2. Coraline couldn't see the mouse circus because the mice were not yet ready and rehearsed.
3. Coraline explored the garden and the grounds.
4. Coraline's parents worked with computers, from home.
5. Coraline's father suggested that she should explore the flat and list her findings.
6. The mice sent Coraline a message saying that she should not go through the door.
7. Miss Spink and Miss Forcible saw that Coraline was in terrible danger.
8. Miss Spink and Miss Forcible gave Coraline a stone with a hole in it.
9. When Coraline opened the door, the brick wall was gone and the door led into an old hallway.
10. The other mother was taller and thinner, her fingers were long, and her eyes were big black buttons.
11. On the other side of the door, the black cat could talk.
12. Coraline found an old theater with an audience consisting of dogs.
13. The other Miss Spink and Miss Forcible were young and beautiful, but with button eyes.
14. Coraline's other parents wanted her to sew black buttons over her eyes.
15. Coraline's parents had been abducted and hidden away by the other mother.
16. The black cat showed Coraline the mirror in which she could see her parents.
17. The police thought that Coraline had woken up from a nightmare.
18. The other mother told Coraline that her parents had gone away because they were bored with Coraline.
19. The black cat told Coraline to challenge the other mother to a game.
20. Coraline learned that the other mother was fixing all the doors to her world, to keep vermin out, and she learned that the other father wasn't supposed to talk to Coraline when the other mother wasn't around.
21. The trees started to look less real and soon everything was just a white fog.
22. The rats were the other mother's spies.
23. The other mother ate black beetles.
24. The other mother wanted to teach Coraline manners and force her to play in the happy family game.
25. Coraline found three ghosts of children that the other mother had taken away a long time ago.
26. The ghost children wanted Coraline to find their souls.
27. Coraline and the other mother decided to play an exploration game: Coraline would look for her parents and the dead children's souls; if she succeeded, the other mother would let her go.
28. Coraline looked through the hole in her stone and was then able to see the souls.
29. The other mother pretended to help Coraline while leading her astray instead, to the empty apartment where the other father would try to hurt Coraline.
30. The black cat helped Coraline by catching the rat that had the soul.
31. The other mother had hidden Coraline's parents in the snow globe on the mantelpiece.
32. While that was happening all the doors and ways out of the other mother's world were disappearing.
33. Coraline realized that the other mother did not intend to honor their deal and let Coraline go.
34. Coraline pretended that she thought her parents were hidden in the passageway between the worlds.
35. Coraline dreamed that she was having a picnic with the three ghost children.
36. The ghost children warned Coraline that it wasn't over, that she was still in danger because the other mother had lied when she swore on her right hand.
37. The other mother's right hand wanted the black key.
38. Coraline meant that she was using the dolls to pretend to be something other than she really was.
39. Coraline set a trap, with the black key as bait, and tricked the hand into falling in the deep well.