

## Grade 7 - Narrative

### Off to Join the Circus

Seth wanted to explore his options. He wanted to experience something other than farming so he could determine what else he might enjoy in the vast world. He asked permission to leave the farm for a short while to visit the circus.

After his father granted him permission, Seth traveled to Ringville, which was rather close to where he lived and was the site where the circus was currently performing. When Seth reached the circus grounds, he gazed at a poster of a man in a top hat and a cutaway coat. A voice behind him inquired, "Like the photograph? It was taken at the beginning of the new century—1900." A man with ebony hair and mustache stepped forward, and stood in a pose identical to the poster, except that his left arm was in a sling.

Seth was skeptical. "Are you Marvin the Magnificent, Professor of Illusionary Arts?"

"You may call me Professor, and who might you be, and what brings you here to Ringville? The ticket office is not currently open."

"I'm Seth Warren, and I wanted to see the world beyond farming, so I thought that maybe I could become a member of the circus."

Professor raised an eyebrow. "Why do you want to join the circus?"

"I want to be able to do activities I enjoy—juggling or riding a bicycle," stated Seth.

"You remind me of a lad I once knew. Come along, and I'll show you around the circus." He gestured with his right hand. "What keeps you occupied on the farm?"

"My life is quite busy on the farm with the list of chores my father has me complete. I feed the animals, milk the cows, clean out the stalls in the barn, and gather eggs from the chickens. Sometimes the various tasks take a majority of the day and give me little time for anything else."

"I appreciate your enthusiasm, but before you make a commitment to circus life, maybe you should gain more knowledge about the circus. Although the circus may seem like it is all fun, being a member of the circus requires a lot of hard work. I'll give you a tour of the circus grounds," Professor said.

Professor led Seth through a tent where two aerialists were practicing their routine. They were swinging back and forth on the trapeze. "Watch your step. The last time I entered this tent, I was busy watching the very same routine they are doing now,

and I missed a step and twisted my wrist. Now I cannot complete my usual tricks,” remarked the professor.

As they continued through the tent, Seth saw jugglers tossing colorful spheres in the air, chimpanzees riding bicycles, and clowns doing handstands.

Seth asked, “How long does it take to learn to be a circus performer?”

Professor thought for a moment. “Someone once said it takes thousands of hours to become a professional performer.”

Seth was silent upon hearing this information.

“Since I can’t perform my illusions this evening, I will be welcoming folks to the big top. I can’t reimburse the audience, so I need to think of a routine that can replace what I typically do for the show. You could help if you would like to,” stated the professor.

“Sure,” Seth eagerly agreed. He thought that participating in a performance would give him a better sense of what it would be like to work there.

Professor stopped to get the supplies Seth would need—an artificial flower and drinking straws. “First put a flower stem in the straw and offer the flower to someone in the audience,” Professor instructed. “When the person takes the straw, continue to hold on to the flower. Most people laugh when they only receive a straw. Then put another straw on your flower so you are prepared for the next guest.”

Seth practiced the routine until he could complete it without making an error. Then, Professor took Seth to the wardrobe shop. People were cutting out costumes from bolts of red, gold, and other colorful fabrics. Others were busy sewing outfits for the performance.

“They sure use plenty of sequins,” Seth remarked. “Everything has to catch the eye!” replied Professor. Seth selected a colorful clown outfit and then had someone apply make-up to his face.

Professor wore a splendid outfit of white trousers and a red jacket with sequined lapels. He walked to the front of the tent, bowed, and removed his top hat as people entered. Seth offered flowers to many who looked perplexed but then giggled when they realized it was part of a routine.

The band began to play “The Stars and Stripes Forever,” so Professor and Seth went inside to watch the show. Seth was entranced with all of the performers—an aerialist swinging high above the audience, a tiger following the commands of its trainer, clowns tumbling around the edges of the center ring, and jugglers riding bicycles.

“Did you enjoy the performances?” Professor asked. “Oh, yes!” Seth stated exuberantly. “Still want to join the circus?”

Seth wrinkled his forehead. “I’ve been thinking about the number of hours you said it takes to be a professional. And although it was fun being part of the circus and watching it, I only have very few hours of experience here. On the farm, I already have hundreds of hours of experience.”

“Good choice, lad.” Professor responded. “If I didn’t have so much time invested in being an illusionist, I might be a farmer myself.”