Brownie

DIRECTIONS: Read the story. Answer the questions.

Brownie was born on a small, family farm. His mother, Mathilda, was a big, strong cow. But Brownie was small, and even more wobbly than a newborn cow usually is.

“That is the scrawniest cow I have ever seen,” Hal’s father said. Hal knew his father was disappointed. He had been hoping that Matilda would give birth to a big, strong, healthy bull.

“I like him,” Hal said. “I’ll take care of him.”

Hal’s father grunted, which was his way of saying that he didn’t agree, but he didn’t entirely disagree either. “Just don’t get too attached,” he said. “I can’t afford to feed a pet cow. Every animal on this farm has either got to be useful, or he’s got to go.”

So Hal took care of Brownie. He spent all of his free time with Brownie, and before long, Brownie was following him everywhere. He walked him to the bus stop in the mornings, and met him there to walk back home with him in the afternoons. Hal used treats to teach Brownie to sit, and to beg. And meanwhile, Brownie was getting BIG.

“I wouldn’t have thought it was possible, but that bull is growing!” Hal’s father said one day. “I may be able to sell him after all.”

“Sell him!” Hal was stunned. “You never told me you were going to sell him!”

“He’s no use to me,” his father said. “My plan was to sell him all along. You know that.”

Hal went out to the barnyard. He had to think fast. It wouldn’t be long before Brownie would be old enough to leave his mother. Just then Brownie walked up behind Hal and bumped him in the back with his head.

“Hi Brownie,” Hal said. He was distracted. But Brownie insisted on his attention. “Brownie, sit!” Hal said, irritably. He loved Brownie, but right now, more than anything, he needed to think. Brownie sat. And sat. And sat. The whole time that Hal was thinking, Brownie sat. And when Hal started back towards the house, intent on begging his father to reconsider, Brownie was still sitting.
“Up, Brownie!” Hal called. Brownie jumped up, trotted towards Hal, and started nuzzling his shoulder. Suddenly Hal had an idea. “Brownie! Beg!” Hal said. Brownie planted his bottom on the ground and lifted his front legs. Hal patted his pockets and managed to come up with a treat. What was that his father had said? *Every animal on this farm has to be useful, or it has to go.*

He understood from listening to his parents talk quietly, late at night, that money was one of the most useful things in the world, and he just knew that people would buy tickets to come see Brownie do his tricks.

That afternoon he made posters and hung them up all over town. “Come see the amazing Brownie,” they said. “The cow that thinks he’s a dog!” The show was set for Saturday, and at $2 a ticket, Hal had high hopes.

When Saturday arrived, people started arriving a full hour before show time. “What the Sam hill are all these people doing here?” Hal’s father demanded. It was time to explain. Hal told his father about the tricks he had been teaching Brownie, and how he was planning a show. “You taught a cow to beg?” he said. “You know, cows aren’t exactly...um...smart.”

“Brownie is!” Hal declared confidently.

That day, Brownie performed in front of fifty people. At the end the day, Hal offered his father the hundred dollars.

“What’s this for?” his father asked.

“You said every animal on the farm had to be useful,” Hal reminded him. “Now Brownie is useful to you. He makes you money. You won’t have to sell him.”

“You keep your money,” his father said. “You earned it.”

“So you won’t sell Brownie?” Hal asked.

“No,” his father said. “Brownie can stay. You keep teaching him tricks and we’ll set up a YouTube channel. I think you have quite a career ahead of you as an animal trainer!”
Color in the happy face next to the correct answer.

1. Why does Hal’s father want to sell Brownie?
   ☺ a. Brownie is mean
   ☺ b. Brownie is too small
   ☺ c. Brownie is not smart

2. How does Brownie act around Hal?
   ☺ a. like a dog
   ☺ b. like a cow
   ☺ c. like a person

3. When does Hal’s father start to notice Brownie again?
   ☻ a. when Brownie does tricks
   ☻ b. when Brownie starts growing
   ☻ c. when Brownie sits

4. How did Hal train Brownie?
   ☻ a. by yelling at him
   ☻ b. by giving him treats
   ☻ c. by spending all his time with him.

5. Why does Hal organize the show?
   ☻ a. to raise money to buy Brownie
   ☻ b. to prove Brownie can do tricks
   ☻ c. to prove Brownie can be useful

6. Why does Hal offer his father the money?
   ☻ a. so he won’t sell Brownie
   ☻ b. so he won’t get in trouble
   ☻ c. so he will buy another cow

Got any more of those treats?