The Coin Flip

It was summer time, and both Ryan and Richard were excited. Summer meant special, fun things to do. But summer also meant that there were chores that had to be done; chores that were particular to summer. Every year at the beginning of summer, Ryan and Richard’s father flipped a coin to see which boy would get which chore.

“Heads is vacuuming the pool,” their father said. “Tails is mowing the lawn.”

It was Ryan’s year to get whatever chore the coin decided. Richard would get the chore that was left. “Please be tails, please be tails,” Ryan murmured under his breath. His father tossed the coin in the air. Ryan held his breath. Richard grimaced. Why can’t we just pick which chore we want? He wondered to himself. Why does it have to be a game?

The coin landed on heads. Ryan’s face fell. He hated to vacuum the pool. It was such a tedious job, and he had to move so slowly in order to do it. Ryan hated moving slowly. Richard was disappointed too. He hated cutting the grass. It was hot work, and not relaxing like it was to stand in the pool and push the vacuum head slowly, ever so slowly, back and forth, back and forth.

Each chore needed to be done once a week, and the following week Ryan and Richard got busy. Ryan hooked the vacuum hose up to the pool filter and lowered the vacuum head slowly into the pool so that the entire hose would fill with water. He waited impatiently, but still the hose insisted on floating. He heard Richard crank up the lawn mower. Then he began to push it slowly across the yard with his shoulders hunched. I can cut the grass in half the time that it takes Richard, Ryan thought. He looked down at the vacuum hose which had almost all sunk to beneath the surface of the water. He wanted to get this over already! He began to push the vacuum head across the pool. But instead of being sucked up into the vacuum, the debris on the bottom of the pool rose up in all directions and became dispersed in the water. Ryan growled in frustration. “I hate vacuuming the pool!” he said.

“I love vacuuming the pool,” said Richard. Ryan looked up. He hadn’t noticed the lawn mower noise had stopped. “I hate cutting the grass. Let’s switch.”

“But I lost the game,” Ryan said. “Vacuuming the pool is my job this summer.”

“Who cares about the coin flip?” Richard said. “Flipping a coin to decide who gets what chore when it’s so obvious which of us should be doing what is just stupid.”

“I think the coin flip is fun,” Ryan said. “I think games of chance are exciting.”

“But vacuuming the pool isn’t exciting to you is it?”

“No,” Ryan said. “It really is not.”

“I hate games of chance, Richard said. “I like to know what is going to happen. And I think you should go cut the grass.” Ryan got out of the pool and Richard got in. Ryan was soon enjoying the loud noise of the lawn mower, and trying to set a new record for how quickly he could mow the lawn. Richard began to push the vacuum head slowly, ever so slowly, back and forth, enjoying the methodical motion, and getting a great satisfaction from seeing the bottom of the pool come clean. For the rest of the summer, both boys enjoyed doing their chores, and they never flipped a coin over it again.
Compare and Contrast

1. Richard and Ryan have very different personalities. Describe how they are different.

Richard

Ryan

2. What qualities does vacuuming the pool require? Which boy has those qualities?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

3. How do the boys feel about the coin flip? Why?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________