

Name: _____

Wailing Well

by Kelly Hashway

"I dare you!" Eric said.

Charlie couldn't pass up a dare. She was the toughest kid in the fifth grade. She wasn't going to let a little thing like fear ruin her reputation.

"No problem." Charlie shoved her hands in her pockets before anyone could notice they were shaking. So what if there was a kid-hungry troll living in the well on the abandoned lot? She could take a quick peek and run before it climbed up to eat her—right?

"You don't have to do this," Alyson said.

"Yeah, *Charlotte*. We'll understand if you're too scared," Eric taunted.

Charlie hated being called Charlotte. It sounded so girly. "I'm not scared of a silly story."

She pushed through the crowd of kids and marched to the abandoned lot. Her palms were sweaty. No one went near the "Wailing Well." A stray cat had jumped on the edge of it and something pulled it into the well. It happened so fast that no one saw what did it. But now a horrible wailing came from the well. Charlie wasn't sure who had come up with the troll theory, but she hoped that was all it was—a theory.

Wailing came from the well and Charlie froze.

"Scared?" Eric yelled.

Charlie was scared, but she wouldn't admit it, especially to Eric. "You're the one that's scared. Why else would you dare people to look in the well? You're too chicken to do it yourself!"

"Look with her, Eric," Alyson said.

"Yeah," the other kids said.



“Fine.” Eric walked over to Charlie. He gulped, and for the first time, Charlie realized he wasn’t so tough. He put on a good show, but he was all talk. She wondered if he thought the same about her.

Charlie grabbed Eric’s sleeve and charged at the well. Something hairy moved inside. Yellow eyes glowed up at her. The wailing was replaced by a scratching sound, like nails on rock. The creature was climbing up to get them!

Eric screamed and ran back to the bus stop. The sun peeked out from behind the clouds, and Charlie squinted at the creature. She cranked the bucket, lowering it into the well. She heard a soft thump and cranked the bucket back up.

“Are you crazy?” Eric yelled.

Charlie pulled a gray kitten out of the bucket. “The cat didn’t get pulled into the well. It fell. It got hurt, too. That’s why it was wailing.”

“What are you going to do with it?” Alyson asked.

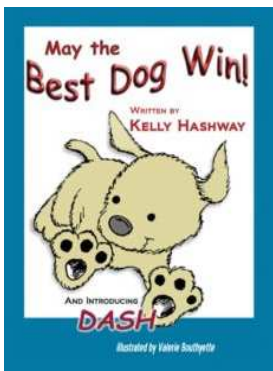
“Bring it to the vet,” Charlie said. “I’ll put up some fliers, and if no one claims it, I’ll keep it.” She scratched the top of the kitten’s head and it purred.

“What will you name it?” Alyson asked.

“Troll,” Charlie and Eric both said.

About the the Author

Kelly Hashway



Kelly Hashway's latest book, *May the Best Dog Win*, is now available!

Dash has the perfect life until the Super Sweeper 5000 shows up. Sweeper runs all over the house sucking up the leftover food scraps, and he even gets his own room! But Dash won't give up his place as the favorite dog without a fight.

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1. Where does this story mostly take place?
- a. on an abandoned lot near Charlie's school
 - b. on an abandoned lot near Charlie's bus stop
 - c. on an abandoned lot near a river
 - d. on abandoned farm land

2. This story is titled, "Wailing Well." Define the word wailing.

3. How are Eric and Alyson different in the way they treat Charlie?

4. How did Charlie rescue the kitten from the well?
- a. She climbed down to get it.
 - b. She called the fire department.
 - c. She lowered a bucket into the well so the kitten could climb in.
 - d. She made cat sounds so it would climb to the top.

5. What type of story is this?
- a. science fiction
 - b. historical fiction
 - c. mystery
 - d. non-fiction

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Match each vocabulary word from the story "Wailing Well" to its definition.

- | | | |
|-------|---------------|---|
| _____ | 1. cranked | a. stopped moving |
| _____ | 2. troll | b. teased |
| _____ | 3. stray | c. beliefs about the way someone acts |
| _____ | 4. froze | d. short, mythical, ugly creature |
| _____ | 5. reputation | e. afraid |
| _____ | 6. taunted | f. part of a shirt that covers the arms |
| _____ | 7. chicken | g. parcel of land |
| _____ | 8. abandoned | h. turned; rotated a handle |
| _____ | 9. lot | i. animal without a home |
| _____ | 10. sleeve | j. remained empty and unused |

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In the story, "Wailing Well," Charlie and her friends are frightened by sounds coming from deep inside a well.

Write a paragraph to describe a time when you were frightened. Tell where you were, who you were with, and what you experienced.

ANSWER KEY

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1. Where does this story mostly take place? **b**
- a. on an abandoned lot near Charlie's school
 - b. **on an abandoned lot near Charlie's bus stop**
 - c. on an abandoned lot near a river
 - d. on abandoned farm land

2. This story is titled, "Wailing Well." Define the word wailing.

wailing - crying loudly, as if suffering

3. How are Eric and Alyson different in the way they treat Charlie?

Eric taunted her and dared her to do something she wasn't comfortable doing. Alyson told Charlie she didn't have to do it, and she dared Eric to walk up to the well with Charlie.

4. How did Charlie rescue the kitten from the well? **c**

- a. She climbed down to get it.
- b. She called the fire department.
- c. **She lowered a bucket into the well so the kitten could climb in.**
- d. She made cat sounds so it would climb to the top.

5. What type of story is this? **c**

- a. science fiction
- b. historical fiction
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Match each vocabulary word from the story "Wailing Well" to its definition.

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| h | 1. cranked | a. | stopped moving |
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