



## **Willie's New Home**

Once upon a time, tadpole named Willie hatched out of a tiny, jelly-like egg. Willie loved the small pond where he lived with his hundreds of brothers and sisters. It was warm near the surface of the water, and cool in the depths between the leaves that had fallen into the pond and settled at the bottom. There was plenty to eat. Grownup frogs came and went, and told stories about other ponds, and about the long, dry areas of ground that stretched interminably between them.

Willie grew, and so did his brothers and sisters. Many of them hopped out of the pond one day and disappeared to look for ponds of their own. But Willie was not adventurous. He liked the pond he was in. And so he remained there perfectly happy. There was no shortage of insects for him to eat, and nothing ever disturbed the pond, which Willie began to think of as paradise.

Then, one day, something did.

At first the water level began to slowly—ever so slowly—fall. First by a quarter inch, then a half inch, then an inch; lower and lower the water level got, and Willie found himself with less and less water to swim in between the sunken leaves and the surface.

Then one day his small, safe pond was pulled completely out from under him, as though someone was tugging at the very earth beneath him. The water swished, and splashed, and the relative dimness of his pond was shattered as suddenly Willie found that he was not in pond at all, but inside of a half-full human swimming pool that had just had its torn and water-logged cover removed. Willie looked around and saw that he was not alone. Friends and relatives, nearly white like him, clung to the bright blue vinyl walls of the pool. Hands reached in and plucked them from the sides of the pool and tossed them gently into the grass. Willie was terrified.

The grass towered over his head. High above him, bobbing this way and that in the breeze, were white flowers. Bees buzzed around him, stopping here and there, but paying no attention to Willie at all. Willie took a hop, then another, then another. He made his way through the forest of grass. The earth was cool and damp beneath his feet. This isn't so bad, he thought to himself. Perhaps there will be another pond not too far away.

But there was no pond. Day after day Willie hopped and hopped. He drank dew from the ground in the early mornings, caught insects in the early evenings. He was all right, except that Willie missed his pond paradise, and as the days went on, he despaired of ever finding such a place again.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Compare & Contrast



Then one day it rained. It was a long, hard, cool rain and indentations in the ground became puddles, and crevices became ponds. Some of this water ran in rivulets and tiny rushing streams through the grass, and Willie remembered something that one of the elder frogs had told all of the younger ones when they began to talk of leaving paradise and finding ponds of their own. "Water always moves from the highest point to the lowest point," the old frog had croaked. "Always follow running water. Because when it reaches the lowest point of all, there will be more water."

So Willie began to follow the water. It rained for two days, and Willis hip-hop-splish-splashed through the puddles and streams as raindrops poured down on his back. Then the sun came out, but still the little streams ran through ruts in the ground and Willie hopped and hopped. Then one day, he stopped.

Spread out before him was the largest pond Willie had ever seen. The water lapped against a pebbly shore, and moved slowly from the left to the right. He had come to the river! He had heard stories about the river as a tadpole. The river was vast. The river was safe. The river was the province of frogs and fish and birds and insects. In the river it was man who was the intruder, not the frogs. With joy Willie splashed into the water. It was warm near the surface of the water, and cool in the pebble-lined depths. There were floating plants to shelter him. Willie knew he had found his new paradise, and there would be no great hands to pull the bottom out from underneath of him and destroy his home this time.

### 1. Describe Willie's first home.

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### 2. Describe Willie's new home, and how it is different from his old one.

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## ANSWERS

1. Willie's old home is actually a covered swimming pool, but to him it is a small pond where he lived with his hundreds of brothers and sisters. It is warm near the surface of the water, and cool in the depths between the leaves that had fallen into the pond and settled at the bottom. There was plenty to eat.

2. Willie's new home is in the river. The water laps against a pebbly shore. The water moves. It is vast and safe, and there are no humans anywhere. It is warm near the surface of the water, and cool in the pebble-lined depths. There are floating plants to shelter him. The major difference is that there will be no great hands to pull the bottom out from underneath of him and destroy his home this time.

