

Fiction: Comprehension Practice 4

An extract from *Count* by Melvin Burgess

Brandon, Waris, and their friends are talking about counting. Elle is there too. She is Brandon's little sister.

Part 1

- 5 Someone was boasting in the playground but for once, it wasn't Brandon. It was Brandon's best friend, Waris. Last night in bed, before he went to sleep, Waris had counted all the way up to one thousand. He'd been trying to do it all week, but he kept getting mixed up and missing numbers out. Not this time. This time he got all the way there.
- 10 His dad lay on his bed and checked to make sure he got it right.
- 'It took me half an hour,' said Waris. 'I had to be very careful not to fall asleep. My dad did, twice. I had to wake him up by shouting the numbers at him.'

Part 2

- 15 'I counted up to six hundred once,' said Sophie, 'but then my mum said it was time to stop.'
- 'I tried too, but I got bored,' said Mu.
- 'I bet you could count higher than that, Brandon, couldn't you?' said Elle.

'Easy,' said Brandon. But he said it quietly, because Waris was his friend and he'd lost a lot of friends lately because of boasting too much.

'How high could you go, Brandon?'

'TEN MILLION,' said Brandon, without even thinking.

25 **Part 3**

'Do it now,' said Elle. 'Go on. Please, Brandon.'

'Now's not a good time.'

'Please?'

Brandon knew the bell would go any time soon, and he thought he'd have
30 to stop then. So he took Elle quietly away to a corner and began to count in a low voice, so that no one else could hear.

'One, two, three, four, five, six, seven,' he said.

'Go, Brandon,' said Elle.

'Eight, nine, ten, eleven,' said Brandon - still very quietly.

35 **Part 4**

'HEY, EVERYONE!' shouted Elle suddenly, at the top of her very loud voice. 'Look at Brandon. He's counting all the way up to TEN MILLION!'

Brandon blushed bright red, but he didn't stop counting. He scowled at Elle, dug his hands deep in his pockets and marched away.

40 'Twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three, twenty-four!' he said angrily.

'Sorry, Brandon,' said Elle. But it was too late. Everyone had left Waris and they were following Brandon to listen to him count up to TEN MILLION.

Waris was furious.

45 'No one can count up to TEN MILLION,' he said. 'It's another stupid Brandon boast.'

Glossary

boasting: talking (a lot) about how clever you are

Read the text and answer questions 1–7.

1) Look at Part 1 (lines 4–14).

(a) Who is boasting at the start of the story?

Waris

(b) Waris got his numbers right. Give the sentence opening which tells us when and where he did this.

Last night in bed, (before he went to sleep)

(c) Look at line 11. Give one pronoun from the first sentence.

it / me

(d) What did Waris's dad do more than once?

He fell asleep.

2) Look at Part 2 (lines 14–24).

(a) Give one quotation that tells us that Elle thinks Brandon is very clever.

"I bet you could count higher than that, Brandon, couldn't you?"
said Elle.

(b) Give one word from Part 2 which means 'recently'.

Lately

3) Look at Part 3 (lines 25–34).

(a) Look at lines 30–31. What does low mean in this sentence? Tick one box.

near the ground

below normal

not bright

not loud

(b) Explain how we know that Brandon is a good brother to Elle.
Give one quotation from the text to support your answer.

Explanation: **Because he does what she wants and he counts for her.**

Quotation: **So he took Elle quietly away to a corner and began to count.**

(c) Look at lines 28–30. Which letters does the apostrophe (') replace?

woul

(d) Look at line 34. Write the four number words in the correct alphabetical order.

Eight

Eleven

Nine

ten

4) Look at Part 4 (lines 35–46).

(a) Look at lines 35–39. Why does the writer use an exclamation mark (!) in line 37?

- to show Elle's amazement
- to show that Elle is shouting/speaking loudly

(b) Brandon is embarrassed because everyone knows he is counting to 10 million.

Give one quotation that tells us that he is embarrassed.

Brandon blushed bright red.

(c) Give one word from the text that means 'made an angry face'.

scowled

(d) Give one word from the text that means 'very angry'.

furious

(e) Look at lines 45–46. What does the word another tell us about Brandon's general behaviour?

Brandon often/always boasts

5) Look at these sentences. Draw lines to match each sentence from the text with the correct sentence type.

Sentence

Sentence type

I tried too, but I got bored.

exclamation

How high could you go, Brandon?

statement

HEY, EVERYONE!

question

Look at Brandon.

command

6) Which of these are used throughout the text? Tick two boxes.

narrative

☐

description

☐

direct speech

☐

time connectives

☐

changes of setting

☐

7) (a) Do you think you would like a sister like Elle? Tick one box.

Answers may vary.

If yes:

Explanation:

- She is proud of her brother
- She encourages her brother
- She apologizes when she has done something wrong

Quotation:

- 'I bet you could count higher than that'
- 'Go, Brandon,' said Elle.
- 'Sorry, Brandon,'

If No:

Explanation:

- She is loud / annoying / embarrassing
- She gets her brother into trouble

Quotation:

- at the top of her very loud voice
- Brandon blushed bright red
- Waris was furious.

(b) In your opinion, is Waris right to be cross with Brandon?

Answers may vary.

If yes:

Evidence:

- Brandon (always) tries to out-do Waris / everyone / always boasts / always tries to impress everybody/ is a show-off
- Brandon boasts he can count to a higher number than Waris
- Everyone leaves Waris to listen to Brandon / Brandon spoils Waris' success / Brandon doesn't stop counting when the others come over to him.

If No:

- Brandon tries to count quietly so no-one would hear him
- It is Elle who tells everyone (Brandon is counting to 10 million)
- Brandon tries to send the others back to Waris
- Brandon is (only) counting for / to please Elle.
- He's just jealous that he didn't/can't do it.

(c) Here are three possible summaries of the text. Choose any one and give a reason why it is a good summary. Tick one box.

The text is about:

Answers may vary

- a boy who wants to be liked: he boasts because he wants people to like him / to impress his friends
- the relationship between brother and sister: Brandon does things for Elle even when they get him into trouble / she supports him / he cares about her
- a group of friends who are competitive: Brandon chooses a much bigger number than Waris / they all want to show how high they can count / show that they can count higher than each other