



I. READING COMPREHENSION (12 marks)

1. Abby's hand shoots up nearly every time her teacher asks the 19 active first-graders in her Philadelphia public school to match letters of the alphabet to the sounds they make. Sitting up front, Abby, 7, looks as eager as any of her classmates to give a quick answer. But every time the teacher calls on her, Abby freezes. She strains to respond and her words are inaudible. She's effectively mute throughout the school day. Her only communication is just few words whispered to a trusted girlfriend.
2. At home, however, Abby is a different child. She loves to play with her brother Jack, 5. "She speaks loudly and can be bossy toward her brother," says mother Lisa Barnes. Abby is, in every other way, a perfectly normal child who has no shortage of extracurricular activities, including horseback-riding lessons and dance classes that she's been attending since she was 4.
3. So why doesn't she speak up in class ? What may at first glance look like shyness is actually something far more complex. Abby, like hundreds of thousands of kids across the US, is suffering from a little-understood childhood disorder called selective mutism. According to psychiatrists, a child who has developed normally at home but has not talked at school or in other social situations for at least a month is a strong candidate for a diagnosis of SM.
4. SM can strike at any age, even among children who once talked in public, but it usually becomes obvious by age 3 or 4. The root of the problem in most cases is an extreme form of social anxiety or phobia. "It is a fear that can literally make it impossible to speak," says Dr. Elisa Blum, who specializes in treating selective mutism. As with most social anxieties, SM is more common in girls and is believed to have a strong genetic component. About 70% of kids with SM have an immediate family member who also struggles with social anxiety.

By Wendy Cole
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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Tick (✓) the most suitable title to the text (1 mark)

a) Why Abby refuses to talk

☐

b) Why Abby won't talk

☐

c) Why Abby keeps talking

☐

2. Correct the following statements with details from the text (3 marks)

a) Abby is able to clearly say letters of the alphabet.

.....

b) Only few American kids suffer from SM.

.....

c) SM affects more boys than girls.

.....

3. Complete the paragraph with words from the text (4 marks)

Selective mutism is a psychological that can
..... at any age. It is some kind of social
..... that makes it impossible for the person to speak up in
.....

4. Pick out two (2) details from the text that show that Abby behaves like a normal child at home (2 marks)

a)

b)

5. Find words that nearly mean the same as : (2 marks)

a) very keen : (paragraph 1)

b) easy to notice : (paragraph 4)