Once upon a time there was an honest shoemaker who was very poor. He worked as hard as he could, and still he could not earn enough to keep himself and his wife. At last there came a day when he had nothing left but one piece of leather, big enough to make one pair of shoes. He cut out the shoes, ready to stitch, and left them on the bench; then he said his prayers and went to bed, trusting that he could finish the shoes the next day and sell them.

Bright and early the next morning, he rose and went to his workbench. There lay a pair of shoes, beautifully made, and the leather was gone! There was no sign of anyone having been there. The shoemaker and his wife did not know what to make of it. But the first customer who came was so pleased with the beautiful shoes that he bought them, and paid so much that the shoemaker was able to buy leather enough for two pairs.

Happily, he cut them out, and then, as it was late, he left the pieces on the bench, ready to sew in the morning. But when morning came, two pairs of shoes lay on the bench, most beautifully made, and no sign of anyone who had been there. It was a puzzle. But the first customer who came was so pleased with the beautiful shoes that he bought them, and paid so much that the shoemaker was able to buy leather enough for two pairs.

Once more he cut out the shoes and left them on the bench. And in the morning all four pairs were made.

It went on like this until the shoemaker and his wife were prosperous people. But they could not be satisfied to have so much done for them and not know to whom they should be grateful. So one night, after the shoemaker had left the pieces of leather on the bench, he and his wife hid themselves behind a curtain, and left a light in the room.

1. to provide for
2. **Prosperous** *(adjective)*: wealthy; rich
Just as the clock struck twelve, the door opened softly and two tiny elves came dancing into the room, hopped on to the bench, and began to put the pieces together. They were quiet, but they had wee\(^3\) little scissors and hammers and thread. Tap! Tap! went the little hammers; stitch, stitch, went the thread, and the little elves were hard at work. No one ever worked so fast as they. In almost no time all the shoes were stitched and finished. Then the little creatures whisked\(^4\) away out of the window.

The shoemaker and his wife looked at each other and said, “How can we thank the little elves who have made us happy and prosperous?”

“I should like to make them some pretty clothes,” said the wife.

“I will make the shoes if you will make the coats,” said her husband.

That very day they commenced\(^5\) their task. The wife cut out two tiny, tiny coats of green, two little pairs of trousers,\(^6\) of white, two bits of caps, bright red, and her husband made two little pairs of shoes with long, pointed toes. They made the clothes as dainty\(^7\) as could be, with nice little stitches and pretty buttons. ;

By Christmas time, they were finished. ;

On Christmas Eve, the shoemaker cleaned his bench, and on it, instead of leather, he laid the two sets of clothes. Then he and his wife hid away as before, to watch.

Promptly at midnight, the little elves came in. They hopped upon the bench; but when they saw the little clothes there, they laughed and danced for joy. Each one caught up\(^8\) his little coat and things and began to put them on. They were so happy. Then, when the clock struck two, they left smiling. They never came back any more, but from that day they gave the shoemaker and his wife good luck, so that they never needed any more help.

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3. tiny
4. **Whisk (verb):** to move or take something in a particular direction suddenly and quickly
5. began
6. pants
7. pretty
8. picked up
Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which of the following best describes a theme of this story? [RL.2]
   A. People who are not successful need to receive all the help they can get from others.
   B. A great way to show your appreciation for what you have is to do kind things for others.
   C. The best way to measure one's happiness is by how much money they have.
   D. Hard work is only worth it if it leads to riches.

2. PART B: Which phrase from the story best supports the answer to Part A? [RL.1]
   A. “Once upon a time there was an honest shoemaker who was very poor. He worked as hard as he could, and still he could not earn enough to keep himself and his wife.” (Paragraph 1)
   B. “But the first customer who came was so pleased with the beautiful shoes that he bought them, and paid so much that the shoemaker was able to buy leather enough for two pairs.” (Paragraph 2)
   C. “No one ever worked so fast as they. In almost no time all the shoes were stitched and finished.” (Paragraph 6)
   D. “They were so happy….They never came back any more, but from that day they gave the shoemaker and his wife good luck, so that they never needed any more help.” (Paragraph 13)

3. How does the following phrase help develop the plot of the story: “They hopped upon the bench; but when they saw the little clothes there, they laughed and danced for joy” (Paragraph 13)? [RL.5]
   A. It shows that the elves were very excited to see that shoemaker and his wife returned their favor.
   B. It shows that the elves only helped the shoemaker because they were hoping that he would make them clothes.
   C. It proves that the elves were poor themselves, and they helped the shoemaker because they know what it's like to have bad luck.
   D. It makes it clear that the elves would have preferred to receive two pairs of shoes instead of the clothes.

4. Which phrase best describes the reactions of the shoemaker and his wife when they learned what the elves were doing? [RL.3]
   A. angry that the elves entered their home without permission
   B. surprised yet grateful and wanting to repay the elves
   C. happy that someone else was doing their work so they could relax
   D. greedy and excited that they could sell the shoes for more than they were worth
5. Identify and explain the theme of the story. Cite evidence from the text in your response.
Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. What do the events of the story tell us about the shoemaker as a person? Is he hard-working or lazy? Grateful or ungrateful?

2. Why do you think such a fantastical fairy tale would still be remembered and told in modern times? Is there something about the story that might apply to everyday life?

3. How would you describe the last line of the story? Why is it significant that the elves no longer needed to return after they had given the shoemaker a bit of help? Is it better to help someone who wants to achieve success for him/herself, or to provide for someone entirely?

4. In “The Elves and the Shoemaker,” the elves never interact directly with the couple they help, and yet they are still willing to offer their assistance. In the context of this story, what is good and how do we know? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.