THE GREAT BRAIN AT THE ACADEMY

By John Fitzgerald

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READING RIGHT
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Tom and his brother, Sweyn, are from a small town called Aldenville, which doesn’t offer school above the sixth grade. They attend a boarding school in Salt Lake City run by Father Rodriguez. When the other boys found out he had ridden up from with the engineer on the locomotive he became an instant hero. Tom immediately runs into trouble when he questions Father Rodriguez about the fairness of the rules.

Tom had brought candy bars with him to school, which was against the rules. When someone tried to snitch on him, his cure was to make sure no one talked to the snitch. Soon everyone seemed to be on his side except a boy named Rory. For one of Tom’s punishments, he was supposed to peel potatoes each morning, but he talked the other boys into doing it for him. Another punishment was to have him clear the washroom. He discovered that if he quickly did the cleaning, he could sneak out to the local candy store and then return and sell the candy for a profit to the other children. Tom always had schemes for making money and when one fizzled out he would just come up with a new one. His younger brother sums up Tom’s year at school at the end of the book when he suggests that Tom may have seemed to change but he doubted that he really had.
1. Why are Tom and Sweyn’s stories different from each other?
   A. They were at different places, so they had different things happen to them.
   B. Tom and Sweyn do not like each other.
   C. Two people seeing the same event sometimes see it differently.

2. What does the word “shenanigans” mean?

3. Why did Tom and his brother have to go to Salt Lake City to go to school?

4. How did Tom know that the deck of cards were marked?
   A. He had seen the same kind of marked cards at home.
   B. He could see the markings on the cards.
   C. He really didn’t know, he was just bluffing.

5. Why do you think Tom is called the Great Brain?
1. Who is Father Joe?

2. Where did Tom hide his candy bars?

3. What was Tom's cure for tattle tales?

4. What does the word “conniver” mean?

5. Why did Tom speak up about his punishment from Father Rodriquez instead of accepting it?
   A. He was a smart-aleck kid.
   B. Because he hadn’t heard clearly.
   C. Tom’s father had taught him to speak up at unfairness.

6. What do you think about someone who is a snitch? Explain why you think that?
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LESSON 3
Chapters 5 – 6

1. Tom hates to peel potatoes. What idea does he come up with so peeling the potatoes will go faster?
   A. He’d pretend to be sick so he doesn’t have to peel them.
   B. He gets his friends to help him peel them.
   C. He hides some of the potatoes so there won’t be so many.

2. How did Tom try to convince Father Rodriguez that he had really peeled all the potatoes himself?

3. What does the word “initiation” mean?

4. When did Tom know that his potato caper had been found out?

5. Why did Tom want to write a letter to the Pope?

1. What was the real reason Tom didn't want his punishment of cleaning the washroom to end?

2. How did Tom make the duplicate key that would get him into the storeroom?

3. What does the idiom "pull the wool over their eyes" mean?

4. In Tom's Mental Marvel plan he connives to get the others money. Describe his plan?

5. If you went to Tom’s school describe what would you have like the best? Describe what would you have liked the least?
1. Why was Rory causing Tom so much trouble?
   A. Rory was just the kind of kid that liked to get others in trouble.
   B. Rory didn't like Tom's brother Sweyn.
   C. Tom had embarrassed Rory and he was angry about and also jealous of him.

2. When Tom went home for Christmas vacation, he made a bet with his brother John that the loser would have to do all the chores. What was the bet?

3. Why was John disappointed with his Christmas present at first?

4. At the end John writes about his brother and says he may have matured but he has not reformed. What did he mean?

5. There are many characters in the book each with different qualities. Choose one of them and tell what qualities you have in common.
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ANSWER KEY

LESSON 1
1. C
2. Shenanigans mean mischievous pranks.
3. The school in Aldenville only went to sixth grade, to continue school students had to go elsewhere.
4. A
5. Answers may vary. Most likely something to do with the Tom's ability to use his brain to figure things out, and in his case to make money too.

LESSON 2
1. Father Joe was a Jesuit priest who came to Aldenville once a year to take care of the needs of the town Catholics.
2. In the base of the Saint Francis statue.
3. No one could talk to a snitch.
5. C
6. Answers will vary. Some children do not like snitches. Discussion should bring out that when someone's life is involved or property is being damaged the right thing to do is tell someone.

LESSON 3
1. B
2. Tom tried to trick the Father be pretending that he could hypnotize himself.
3. Initiation means a ceremony to admit a person into a group.
4. Tom knew his potato caper was up when The Father came to the first class and told the boys to raise their hands.
5. Tom wrote to the Pope to get Father Rodriguez removed from the high school.
6. Answers will vary.
LESSON 4
1. Tom didn’t want his washroom punishment to end because the washroom had access to the outside that Tom used to go to the candy store for his business.
2. Tom made a duplicate key to the storeroom by whittling it out of wood.
3. Pulling the wool over someone’s eyes means that what is being seen is not what is really happening, they are being tricked.
4. In Tom’s Mental Marvel plan he plans to read the other students’ minds for money.
5. Answers will vary.

LESSON 5
1. C
2. Tom made a bet with his brother he could prove that something new had happened since he had left for school.
3. John was disappointed with his Christmas present because it seemed like another one of his father’s crazy ideas.
4. John thinks Tom is still a schemer.
5. Answers will vary.