

Part-time Job

When I was a sophomore in high school, I started an after-school part time job. I got a job working at an ice cream shop in my neighborhood. I was excited to work there, because I had been a regular customer at the shop when I was a kid. I worked at the shop a few days a week, usually beginning at around 6:30p.m., after my tennis or baseball practice. I would work until around 10:00p.m., but sometimes even later on Saturdays or Sundays, because there would often be lots of customers, even quite late at night.

Every workday, I would arrive about ten minutes before my shift was scheduled to start. My parents had raised me to think that ‘being on time means begin ten minutes late.’ Just before my shift, I would check to see if there were any dishes in the sink. If there were, I’d wash them, and then clean the kitchen. Next, I would make fresh waffle cones – I would measure the waffle mix, add water, and mix until it was smooth. I would then pour the mix over a hot waffle iron, and close the lid. About a minute later, I’d take the fresh waffle off the iron, and wrap it around a wooden cone to make the right shape. The delicious aroma of the fresh waffle cones would often draw in customers who might have otherwise walked on by.

Most of the time, I worked at the front of the shop. The counter had a big freezer with our 18 different flavors of ice cream. The glass top let customers see what they want to order. On weekends during the summer, the line of people waiting to order often stretched out the door, and even around the corner. Even though it took some time, my favorite thing to make for customers was a banana split. I’d cut a banana in half, long ways, and put it in a special long bowl. Next, I would scoop three different ice cream flavors, usually vanilla, chocolate, and strawberry, and put them in between the two banana pieces. Then, I would add chocolate sauce, strawberry sauce, and pineapple sauce, before putting a swirl of whipped cream on each of the ice cream scoops. Finally, I topped it all with sprinkles and peanuts, and then put a cherry on top.

I really enjoyed working at the ice cream shop, even though it was often busy. Sometimes I would manage the shop by myself. I had a really good boss, who taught me all there was to know about running the shop, from soup to nuts. I enjoyed the responsibility of running the shop by myself sometimes, and I learned a lot. I loved it there.

Questions, Answers and Hints:

1. What country is this story set in (Hint: English-speaking country)?

Answer: America/The US.

Hints/Clues: The biggest clue is the use of the North American term, ‘sophomore,’ which is not used commonly used in the English-speaking nations of the Commonwealth. Another minor hint is playing baseball as a sport – also not common in English-speaking countries outside of North America. Finally, the idiom ‘from soup to nuts,’ also addressed in the final question, appears to be an American idiom.

2. How old was the narrator when he started working at the ice cream shop?

Answer: Around 15 years old.

Hints/Clues: ‘Sophomore’ is also a hint for this question – meaning second year of high school, this would be around 15 years old. Students should be encouraged to look this up using ‘sophomore’ as a clue.

3. Was it a popular ice cream shop?

Answer: Likely yes.

Hints/Clues: The narrator mentions that on weekends, there would be many customers, even

quite late at night, and during the summer, the line of customers would stretch out of the door and around the corner. This suggests that it was likely a very popular shop.

4. Do you think the narrator was a conscientious worker?

Answer: Likely yes.

Hints/Clues: He would come ten minutes early every workday, and would begin tasks before his shift started. He was also entrusted with the responsibility to run the shop by himself from time to time. Finally, although mentioning several times that it was very busy work, he nevertheless ‘learned a lot,’ and ‘loved it there,’ suggesting he took pride in his work.

5. Was it a large ice cream shop?

Answer: Probably not.

Hints/Clues: Given that the line of customers would ‘often stretch out the door, and even around the corner,’ it suggests that there was not a lot of space in the shop itself. Also, as the narrator sometimes ran the shop by himself, it was apparently small enough to be operated by one staff member if necessary.

6. What do you think the idiom ‘from soup to nuts’ means?

Answer: From beginning to end, start to finish, the whole thing.

Hints/Clues: The contextual clue given is that the narrator’s boss taught him ‘all there was to know about running the shop,’ suggesting that he knew the procedure from opening to closing. Students should be encouraged to think from context, but if they are struggling, may look it up. This final question should be a learning point about idioms, how common they are in everyday language use, and how to look them up.