

Yolanda's Genius by Carol Fenner

Andrew and Yolanda watched from the breakfast table. They waited, each in their own way, for their momma to utter her usual moan: "We've got to get out of this town." But this time, she didn't say a word. She just stared down through the snow at that planet of hers.

Yolanda's pulse of worry returned, rose, and beat against her temples.

She knew that night, when her mother got out her handsome leather briefcase and started going over her résumé, that she was going to find another job-- away from Chicago.

Her mother's idea of a great place to live included fresh air, peace and quiet, and trees.

She was always talking about growing flowers and owning a barbeque grill that they wouldn't have to chain to the house. Yolanda fretted. Her mother's tastes were definitely limited.

"I don't ever want to move to a place where they can't do double Dutch," she said to the back of her mother's head.

Her momma didn't even turn around. "Better to be a big fish in a little pond," she said, "than a little fish in the ocean."

"I'm already a big fish in these waters," said Yolanda. Yolanda was big-huge. Tall and heavy and strong. Double Dutch wasn't one of her powers, nor was making friends, but she often stood around watching, hoping the jumpers would need a rope turner. "I'm already a big fish," she repeated.

Her momma laughed. "You got that right, baby," she said.

Yolanda sighed. She wondered unhappily how much time she had to cram in the precious morsels of Chicago living. She suddenly loved her street, her school, the kids who were not her friends. She loved the great public library and the Art Institute of Chicago. How long, she wondered, before her mother found a law firm in another place that needed a paralegal?

Name:

Date:

Please answer these questions in your own words. You may use extra paper if you need it.

Question #1: What kinds of things does Yolanda like about Chicago?

Question #2: Describe the kind of place in which Yolanda’s mother would like to live.

Question #3: How can you tell whether or not Yolanda has many friends in Chicago?

Question #4: What does Yolanda’s mother mean when she says, “Better to be a big fish in a little pond than a little fish in the ocean?”
